GAME OF THE MONTH: NBA LIVE 96

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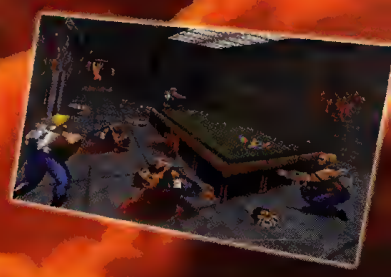
DUKE NUKEM 3D

58 KILLER REVIEWS



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RAYMAN Demo Questions

1. All this outrageous action takes place in this setting.
2. You do this to make the valuable purple fruit fall.
3. There is an extra one of these hidden on the platform above the wooden hand.
4. What piece of gold do you get if you float on the purple fruit?
5. How many hidden cages are in this demo?
6. (down) Rayman will scream if you _ _ _ _ too far over the side of the platform.
6. (across) When you press the X button on your keyboard, what is it that Rayman sticks out to scare the taller guards?
7. What kind of slimy animals do you have to dodge when you are climbing the pink and purple vines?
8. Go to the Ubi Soft web site to learn the game's _____ codes. (http://www.ubisoft.com)

Name _____ Age _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Magazine _____

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IMAGES COURTESY OF APOGEE

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By Steve Klett

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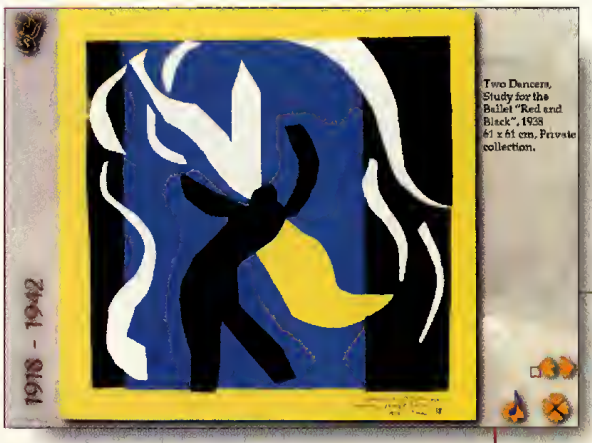
By Christine Grech

A museum's not so different from a computer game: Both will make your eyes glaze over if you spend too much time in one. Get a little culture the easy, high-tech way with 17 virtual art museums on CD-ROM.



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DOS, Windows, and Macintosh

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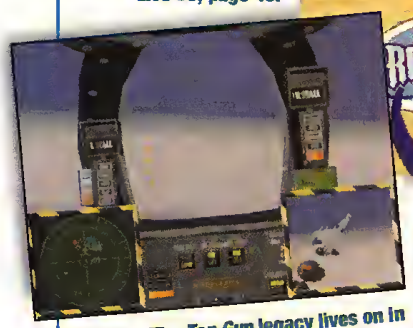

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VOLUME 3, NUMBER 4

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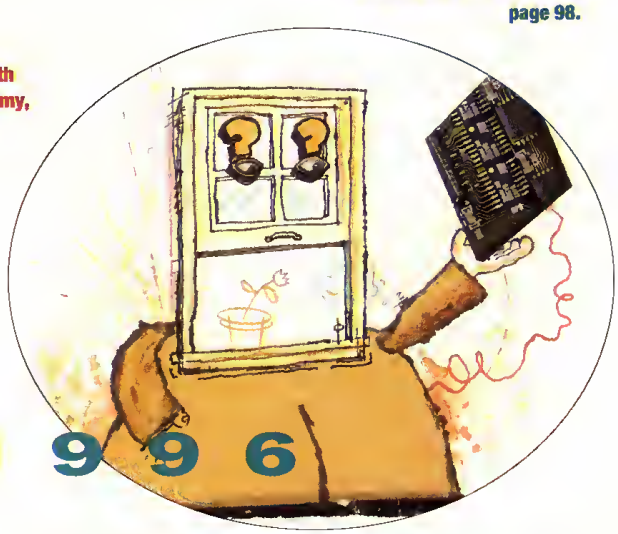

April 1996

Fredric Paul

Eye of the Beholder

The best-looking images in the world all seem to be on CD-ROM these days. From 33 great-looking games to 14 multimedia titles and 17 high-brow art discs, you'll find terrific pictures comprising just about everything digital in this month's issue.

But as *PC Entertainment* points out in review after review after review, beauty is, as they say, only skin deep. And that holds true whether we're talking about fine art in features editor Christine Grech's story "State of the Art" (page 34), fast action games in associate editor Steve Klett's review of Mindscape's Cyberspeed (page 44), or dramatic multimedia titles like The War In Vietnam (reviewed on page 82).

The issue isn't just whether or not a game or multimedia title looks good. In the modern world, it's simply not enough to sport an attractive interface and flashy graphics. To be considered worthy, a product has to deliver more. Much more.

In the case of games, that means satisfying game play, depth, and involvement. Duke Nukem 3D (previewed on page 30) has a hi-res mode that looks damn good by Doom-style standards. But let's face it: When you view it up close, the images begin to break apart into their component polygons. It's still technically impossible to mix ultra-high-resolution graphics with fast action and full freedom of movement. Clever design, a sense of humor, and nonstop excitement never give you time to worry about a few bit-mapped characters or jagged edges. But sit down to play a game like Cyberspeed, and you'll get so bored that you'll pass the time searching for flawed images. And while Angel Devoid (page 62) may sport some slick video, it's over so quickly that you'll hardly get the chance to enjoy it.

Things are no different with the fine art CD-ROMs. All 17 discs we looked at boast beautiful images. Hell, they'd berter—that's what they're all about. But exemplary products like A Passion for Art and Le Louvre stand head and shoulders above pretentious blunders like History Through Art, and it's not because they hold berter pictures. It's because they work berter, are berter designed, and are more satisfying to use.

So go ahead, feast your eyes on all the great images in this issue. And if you want to see even more eye candy, load the *PC Entertainment CD-ROM* or check out *PC Entertainment Online* at **http://www.pcentertainment.com**. Just remember, looking good may be the best revenge, but it's not enough to ensure a first-class gaming or multimedia experience. If you want to guarantee that, you'll have to read the review.

And, finally, this issue we say goodbye to executive editor Christopher Lindquist. One of the founding editors of *Electronic Entertainment/PC Entertainment*, Chris has decided to take a "straight" job. He will be missed.

FP

Tell me what you think! Send e-mail to fpaul@iftw.com; fax me at 415-349-7482; or send snail mail to Editor, *PC Entertainment*, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

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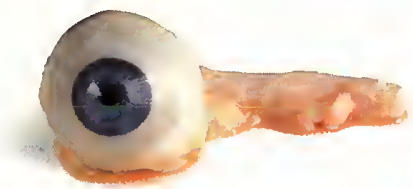

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Letters

Gaming College

I recently read your article "Gaming Goes to College" (January 1996, page 13) about a course offered at the University of North Texas that teaches computer game designing. I am very interested in this course and would like to get more information.

Jason McCleery
Bushnell, IL

This unique program is the brainchild of Professor Ian Parbarry. You can reach him at **ian@cs.unt.edu**. *For further information about Parbarry's course, Computer Game Design and Programming, try the Laboratory for Recreational Computing's web site at* **http://hercule.csci.unt.edu/larc.** *You can also phone the University of North Texas' Department of Computer Sciences at 817-565-2767.* —*Ed.*

Looking for the Multimaniac

I was appalled to see the February 1996 issue without my favorite columns, the Multimaniac and Finishing Moves. Is this temporary or permanent? Also, how can subscribers obtain the CD-ROM with their subscription?

Michael Grynbaum
West Hartford, CT

Look for the Multimaniac on page 26 of this issue. As for Finishing Moves, it will continue to appear as space permits. Finally, to upgrade your subscription to include the monthly CD-ROM, call 800-688-4575. —*Ed.*

Where Is It?

Your January 1996 issue skipped directly from the Guided Tour to the Games section. Why did you decide to delete Game News from the magazine? I enjoyed that section.

Joe Polastre
Drums, PA

Wake up, sleepyhead! Game News is still there; it merely moved to the front of the magazine to join our new Multimedia News and Online News sections. —*Ed.*

Easy to Use

I recently played Trimark's new game The Hive for Windows 95 and really enjoyed it. (My only complaint is that the ending does not measure up to the overall quality of the game.) If all the new Win 95 games are like The Hive, I will totally abandon DOS. I didn't have to deal with any configurations and I had it going in ten seconds—trouble-free. Do all Win 95 games run as smoothly and hassle-free as this one?

Brent Egelhoff
Segelhoff@aol.com

If you've got enough computing horsepower, most truly native Windows 95 games should be just as easy to install and configure. That's what Microsoft promises, anyway, and in our experience, it has proven true for the most part. —*Ed.*

Equal Coverage

I am increasingly disappointed with your negligence when covering Mac games. Your review of Bad Mojo (January 1996, page 90) stated that the game runs in Windows and Windows 95. However, the advertisement on page 71

clearly states that it's "an interactive adventure for Windows and Mac CD-ROM."

Additionally, when you list system requirements in your reviews of games that are both PC and Mac, you occasionally omit detailed system requirements for Macs. While this underscores the Mac's ease of use, I would still like to see specific information about RAM, colors, and price.

Brian Nakamoto
btn@ns.net

We try to list all the computer platforms for each game. Whenever possible, we also include system requirements for all platforms. However, if requirements are not available by press time, we are unable to do so. —*Ed.*

DOS or Windows 95?

I want to buy MechWarrior 2 for Windows 95, but it supposedly requires a Pentium processor and 12MB of RAM. I have a 486DX2 with 8MB RAM. Should I buy the Windows 95 version or the DOS version? Will there be much difference between the two? On what machine did you review the game?

Anonymous

We reviewed the DOS version, and that's what you should buy, as the Windows 95 version does require a Pentium and extra memory. MechWarrior 2 for Windows 95 does come with a copy of NetMech, which allows multiplayer tournaments. However, by the time you read this, the DOS version of NetMech should also be available. —*Ed.*

Cheats?

I think your magazine is good and has lots of information. It would be nifty, though, if you had more cheat codes in every issue.

Bryan Kiowal
bkiowal@ix.netcom.com

Look for our new cheat list at http://www.pcentertainment.com. —*Ed.*

Editor's Note:

Shane Mooney's comment that Aliens' game play "will have you fighting the Babbages store manager for a refund" (February 1996, page 64) was not intended to disparage Babbages' return policies in any way. It was intended only to indicate that players might not be fully satisfied with the game.

Got something you want to get off your chest? Do it! Write, fax, or e-mail us at: Letters to the Editor, c/o PC Entertainment, *951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7781; Internet address, e2Letters@iftw.com; and CompuServe: 73361,265.* ■

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NEWS

Game News

Easy Living With Windows 95

Despite reportedly sluggish sales of the first Windows 95 games, game publishers are standing fast in their support for the new operating system. A key reason is easier tech support.

Eric Johnson, vice president of marketing at Activision, claims that with products such as Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure, "Windows 95 increased customer satisfaction considerably this Christmas." Though Activision was initially concerned about Windows 95's high memory requirements, the company ended up receiving fewer support calls in 1995 than it did in previous years, when all its games ran under DOS.

Doug Valente, tech support manager at Sierra On-Line, says that Windows 95 also reduced his company's technical support load. In particular, the operating system's ability to automatically identify and install hardware device drivers eliminates many compatibility issues. As a result, he says, most tech support calls about The Beast Within have been DOS-related.

Yet Valente notes that Win 95 still baffles many users. Most of Sierra's tech support calls relate to problems users could fix themselves if they better understood the operating system. Win 95's real benefit, Valente says, is that its modular design helps technicians recognize and address problems more quickly than with DOS, shortening calls and easing user frustration.

Ironically, the lack of updated hardware drivers for Win 95 is also causing trouble. Jon Chait, president of Reality Bytes—which developed Havoc—says Microsoft needs to ensure that hardware companies continue to make new Win 95 drivers available, especially as Microsoft releases advanced game-programming interfaces such as Direct3D. As long as the new drivers support a single programming interface, it's easy for game companies to provide the plug-and-play experience game players want. If the hardware drivers don't stay current, though, the performance promise of Windows 95 will go unfulfilled.

—Bill Meyer

Microsoft and Atomic Games' Close Combat should draw war gamers to Windows 95.

Windows 95 Games in '96

One Windows 95 title sure to generate interest with war gamers is Atomic Games' World War II squad-level strategy game Close Combat. Previously known as Beyond Squad Leader and to be published by Avalon Hill Games, Close Combat will now be released by Microsoft midyear for Windows 95 and Macintosh. Combat and simulation fans can also look forward to a new Battle Mech game from a former MechWarrior 2 producer and an off-road driving sim from Terminal Reality. Finally, expect an updated version of Microsoft Flight Simulator, a port of Crystal Dynamix's Gex, and an underwater action game from Rainbow America, developer of The Hive.

–BM

Blizzard Gives the Devil His Due

Blizzard Entertainment scored a hit by adding real-time action and great graphics to the sleepy strategy genre with its Warcraft series. This May, its Diablo will give role playing a facelift. An overhead view, beautiful Super VGA graphics, real-time combat, and a unique level-generation system could make Diablo one of the year's hottest games.

As a young fighter, archer, or wizard, you'll descend into a vast crypt beneath your village to break a deadly curse on the land. Legions of heinous creatures–from skeleton warriors to demons to the undead–lie in wait to destroy you. To make things even more daunting, every time you die, Diablo's level generator completely rearranges the placement of rooms, corridors, monsters, and objects–so you can't rely on your memory to solve each maze.

Superior graphics, tense action, and a sophisticated level generator should ensure solid game play in Diablo.

Luckily, as you finish each level, you'll gain the power and experience to forge ahead. In addition, Diablo's multiplayer capabilities will let you team up with other humans to vanquish this diabolical scourge. Don't be too cooperative, though. Weapons and other supplies are always tough to find. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; $50)

–Bill Meyer

Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: May 1996

Doom Is Dead

Final Doom's TNT: The Evilution was developed by 35 Doom level designers from around the world.

Whether it's cause for celebration or mourning, Doom is done. The last chapter in the phenomenon, **Final Doom**, should be out this month. The new disc will feature two final sagas, **TNT: The Evilution** and **The Plutonia Experiment**, each with 32 levels. In keeping with Doom's worldwide appeal, the first was designed by TNT, an international group of 35 Doom level designers, while the second came from two brothers in the UK. You won't find any new monsters, but each finale features a unique story and daunting mazes to challenge the most dedicated Doomer.

Meanwhile, Raven Software's Heretic and Hexen live on. Though the company sold more than half a million copies of Heretic shareware, the full game has only been available through mail order—until now. **Heretic: Shadow of the Serpent Rider**, featuring the original game plus 18 new levels, is ready and waiting. Also available now is the new **Hexen: Deathkings of the Dark Citadel**, in which players continue the battle against Menelkir, Zedek, and Traductus in The Realm of the Dead.

On a Hollywood note, Doom maker id Software is reportedly talking to megaproducer Ivan Reitman (*Ghostbusters* and *Twins*) about producing a Doom movie. A script is in the works, and the final product could reach a theater near you by next year. Who knows—maybe "the Doom guy" will be brought to life by Reitman's buddy Arnold Schwarzenegger. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847) *—Bill Meyer*

Cheating the Terminator

To destroy the Skynet menace once and for all in Bethesda Softworks' The Terminator: Future Shock, just type these handy cheats in the heat of battle.

firepower: All weapons
bandaid: Restore power and armor
superuzi: Superuzi
nextmission: Next mission
icantsee: Infrared viewscreen
whoami: Identification
turbo: Turbo mode

Interactive Magic's New Tricks

After scoring two major kills with its popular Star Rangers and Apache sims, Interactive Magic isn't just lounging in the officers club. This company's on the move, readying several new titles for takeoff, not the least of which is the retail version of Kesmai's Air Warrior II. The boxed copy of the online flight sim will feature 75 standalone missions, letting combat junkies practice on their own time. After honing their skills, players will be able to connect with other flyboys via direct connections or various online services. The online version is currently available on Delphi, and rumor has it that CompuServe and America Online are planning Air Warrior II support. Look for the boxed game this summer.

Interactive Magic brings Kesmai's online Air Warrior II to the masses this summer.

Wild Bill Stealey's bunch also plans to release a computerized Decathlon sim in time for this year's Summer Olympics in Atlanta. Players will be able to compete in single events such as the 100-meter dash or go for the gold in all 10 decathlon contests.

Meanwhile, strategy fans should keep an eye out this spring for Destiny, which lets players mold the development of humankind from the Stone Age to the Space Age, and The American Civil War, a game tracking America's bloodiest conflict from Fort Sumter to Appomattox. (Interactive Magic; 800-789-1534) *–Christopher Lindquist*

scouting REPORT

■ Activision will publish Adeline Software International's Windows 95/DOS 3-D action game **Time Commando** this

April. Players must travel through 9 different time periods and battle more than 60 different enemies before they can return home. (Activision; 800-477-3650)

■ In New World Computing's spring release for Windows 95 and Macintosh, **Chaos Overlords**, the world is in a state of turmoil. Government bans on all pleasures–from cigarettes to dancing–have whole cities in revolt, leaving ruthless gang lords like yourself in power. Destroy five rival overlords attempting to control your city. Bribe cops, extort money, and rub out anyone in your way. (New World Computing; 800-325-8898)

■ Despite hard times at Sanctuary Woods, the company is shipping the fully animated adventure **Orion Burger** this month for DOS and Mac. Prove to aliens that humans are "intelligent" life, or you could end up in the next Orion Burger at an alien fast-food joint. This one will have plenty of humor and bizarre characters. (Sanctuary Woods; 800-943-3664; $44.95)

■ Philips continues its PC game push with **Voyeur II** ($49.99), due this month for DOS and Mac. The game plops you back behind the video camera to spy on a murder, this time with improved graphics and better game play. Also out now, **Gearheads** ($39.99) provides a humorous strategy challenge for Windows, DOS, and Mac. Choose your forces from an

continued on page 12

NEWS

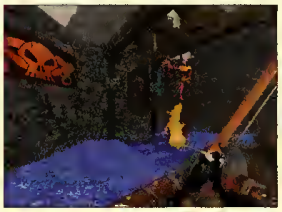
scouting REPORT

assortment of toys and battle for supremacy. (Philips Media Games; 800-883-3767)

■ Ahoy, mates. Ocean of America will be shipping the swashbuckling DOS pirate adventure **Sea Legends** this month. As a young sailor commissioned to sail to the West Indies, you'll engage renegade pirates on land and sea. For more historical action, Ocean is also shipping the DOS World War II simulation **Offensive** now. (Ocean of America; 408-289-1200; $42.95 each)

■ **Mindscape** and **Marvel Comics** have inked a deal to produce games based on the Marvel 2099 characters, including Spider-Man, The Hulk, and Ghost Rider. (Mindscape; 800-234-3088)

■ Capstone's **Witchaven II** will hit shelves this month. Once again, gamers clash with the



Cirae-Argoth on the Island of Char. Look for new 3-D rendered warriors and demons, enhanced weaponry and spells, and multiplayer support for up to 16 players. (Capstone; 800-468-7226; $39.95)

■ Fans of the *Die Hard* movies can step into John McClane's shoes in Fox Interactive's **Die Hard Trilogy** ($59.98) for Windows 95. Blast your way through 3 different games spanning 36 levels that re-create key locations in all three *Die Hard* movies, including Nakatomi Plaza and Washington/Dulles Airport.

Virgin Volume

Virgin hopes to sideline EA Sports with its new sports division.

Command & Conquer: Red Alert will feature an array of devastating new weapons and units.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment has a lot in store for gamers.

Westwood Studio's **Command & Conquer: The Covert Operations** is in the pipeline now, offering 15 new expert-level missions for solo play (8 for the Brotherhood of Nod and 7 for the Global Defense Initiative) and 10 new multiplayer scenarios. Even better, the hit strategy title's sequel, **Command & Conquer: Red Alert**, should hit the shelves this fall. This follow-up predates the original C & C and assumes Hitler never took power. Instead, Stalin's Soviet empire is storming across Europe. Join or fight against the communist columns in land, sea, and guerrilla battles. And expect a wicked arsenal of weapons and units, including spies, saboteurs, mobile radar jammers, guard dogs, and submarines. A Windows 95 version of the original C & C, complete with Super VGA graphics, is due out this summer.

Virgin also plans to faceoff with EA Sports, and an early look at its sports division lineup, developed by Radical Entertainment, indicates that it may be up to the challenge. **NHL Powerplay '96** features the latest in motion-capture technology, the NHL Players Association license, and advanced artificial intelligence. Meanwhile, **The Show** baseball sim looks equally impressive, with stunning 3-D stadiums, video-based players, and the Major League Baseball license.

Fans of adventure won't be left out in the cold either. The medieval fantasy adventure **Rivers Of Dawn**, a savvy blend of video and 3-D graphics, and **Circle of Blood**, a more classically animated thriller, should score big with gamers. Look for both titles by early summer. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607)

—Bill Meyer

PowerVR Does 3D for Less

Computer- and chip-maker NEC has teamed up with graphics pro VideoLogic to produce what may be the hottest new 3-D graphics chip, at least for the near future. The pair's PowerVR technology takes an innovative approach to 3-D that should result in a batch of truly powerful yet inexpensive 3-D accelerator boards.

PowerVR works its magic by eliminating the need for high-priced "z-buffer" memory. Z-buffer stores the exact location of objects in a virtual 3-D world. Hence, even if one object is concealed by another, the z-buffer still recognizes the hidden object and prepares its information for display on the screen. Unfortunately, extra memory is costly. In addition, packing the z-buffer can create a bottleneck when too much information is passed back and forth too rapidly.

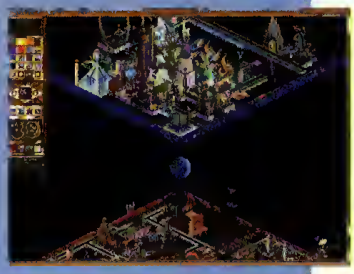
NEC and VideoLogic solve the problem by replacing the z-buffer with an "image synthesis processor," a chip with no external memory that handles all the tasks associated with Z-buffering. The result is cheaper, high-performance 3-D that will appear on boards by VideoLogic and others in the late summer or early fall for around $200.

–Christopher Lindquist

Hands-on Heaven And Hell

Throwing caution to the wind, LucasArts has decided to really break new ground. Not only is Lucas actually doing another game unrelated to one of its hit properties, but it wants to make you the overlord of heaven and hell in Afterlife.

Choose to be the heavenly host or Hades' handyman, developing your given domain with the guidance and aid of three advisors. Select the proper zoning relating to incoming souls' mortal sin or saintly deed and build the appropriate structures for them to haunt or inhabit. In the meantime, you'll be treated to solid, sim-style graphics and great music. If you're an able manager, you'll keep righteous souls in bliss and hopeless sinners in the hot seat. Things could get a bit chaotic, though. Plagues and natural disasters usher in thousands of souls at a time and, in this game, Hell *does* freeze over. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927)



Manage the affairs of heaven and hell.

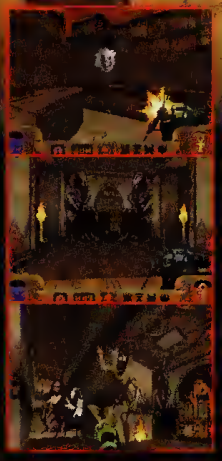
–Bill Meyer

Platform: DOS CD, Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Available: May 1996

RAMSES WAS DEAD WHEN THEY ENTOMBED HIM.

YOU MAY NOT BE SO LUCKY.

The darkness of ancient Egypt and an evil alien power have reached across time and space to take our world hostage. And in comparison to what these mutants have planned for humanity, death is kind. Airdropped into a landscape shrouded in terror, you must journey through multiple, 3-D levels to defeat this scourge.



Your one salvation? The guiding Spirit of the Great King Ramses. The rest of the time you're on your own. Unless of course, you're networked with up to 8 other players.

So, welcome to the valley of the shadow of death. And enjoy your stay. It may last forever.

http://www.playmatestoys.com

RATING PENDING RP

POWERSLAVE

PLAYMATES INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT, INC. PIE

16200 Trojan Way
La Mirada, CA 90638
(714) 562-1743

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PC CD-ROM

NEWS

Multimedia News

Mortimer and the Riddles of the Medallion, from LucasArts.

Child's Play

Activision, GT Interactive, and LucasArts. How do these game heavyweights plan to top the likes of MechWarrior 2, Doom II, and Rebel Assault II? Would you believe with the Muppets, the Little Critter, and a flying snail named Mortimer?

As unlikely as it may seem, all three game companies are expanding into children's software in a big way. Activision was scheduled to release **Muppet Treasure Island** in February, about the same time as GT Interactive's **Just Me and My Dad**, a collaboration with creator Mercer Mayer. LucasArts will follow with **Mortimer and the Riddles of the Medallion**, an original kids game due in May.

Activision's Muppet Treasure Island.

The three high-profile kids titles are no coincidence. Their developers all agree that the growing home-PC market presents a new opportunity to expand their demographic bases. New for them, maybe. But how can these game companies compete with the thousands of titles already on the market from experienced edutainment producers?

The key is quality—and game makers do have the resources to provide higher production values. According to Eric Johnson, vice president of marketing for Activision, that translates into developing new technology and spending more than $2 million on Muppet Treasure Island—a sum comparable to the cost of a "grown-up" game. (By comparison, a standard kids title from an edutainment company carries a $500,000 budget.) Along with the movie tie-in, Activision is promoting the title by packaging a $5-off coupon with some 22 million McDonalds' Happy Meals.

But what do the developers and publishers of high-adrenaline grown-up games know about kids? The question's irrelevant, say the companies. "It's not edutainment, it's entertainment," says Activision's Johnson.

And while LucasArts product marketing manager Tom Byron describes Mortimer as "an action game with an edutainment bent," he views the competition as Nintendo games, not edutainment titles on CD-ROM. Byron happily points out that Mortimer adapts the hot game engine developed for Rebel Assault II and may be the first kids' disc to recommend a joystick for best results.

—Christine Grech

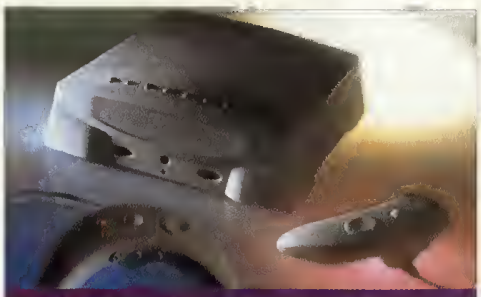
Pippin Power?

While the world frantically searches for the mythical $500 "network computer," Apple thinks it already has one. On sale this month in always-more-expensive Japan for ¥65,000 (about $650), the Pippin PowerPlayer falls somewhere between a game machine and an almost-Macintosh.

Equipped with a 66MHz PowerPC 603 processor, 6MB of memory and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, the Pippin attaches to your TV set or computer monitor. For input, you get a combination trackball/game controller, while a standard Mac keyboard, mouse, and floppy disk drive are optional. With a dumbed-down version of the Macintosh operating system partially in the machine's ROM and partially on every Pippin CD-ROM, there's no need for a hard disk.

First shown in the U.S. at January's Macworld, the Pippin won't be made by Apple, but by Bandai Company Ltd., Japan's largest toy maker. Neither company will specify a date for the American introduction, originally scheduled for late last year, but the product is expected this year for less than $500.

As far as software–the big problem with most new platforms–while Pippin won't run real Mac software, Apple claims developers will have to make only minimal modifications. (As a bonus, Pippin titles will run on Macs.) Bandai is paying some 27 developers to create or port titles–many of them entertainment discs. Also, Apple is waiving royalty fees for the first year.



Will the new Pippin PowerPlayer lure gamers from their PCs?

Will that be enough to compete against full-featured computers on one side and more powerful game consoles on the other? It's too early to say, but Pippin's potential as a network computer is said to be a key lure for companies looking to acquire Apple.

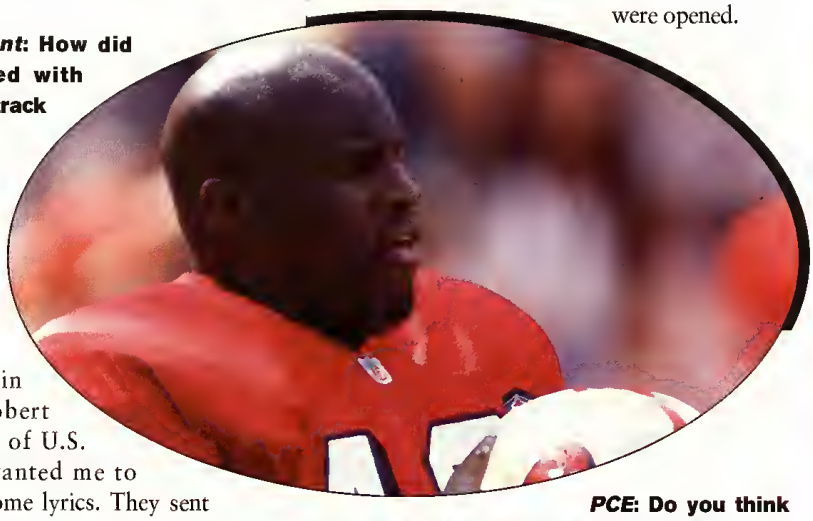
–Fredric Paul

with William Floyd

When San Francisco 49ers running back William Floyd injured his knee at the beginning of last season, the ebullient second-year star didn't get depressed. Instead, he got busy, rapping a soundtrack to U.S. Gold's new tank shoot-'em-up, Shell Shock, and putting together his own multimedia CD-ROM "Trading Disc" about the 49ers. PC Entertainment *editor in chief Fredric Paul recently spoke to the multitalented Floyd about his new projects.*

***PC Entertainment*: How did you get involved with doing the soundtrack for Shell Shock?**

William Floyd: I had met this guy earlier last year at a big Sega convention, and he knew that I rapped and whatnot. He put me in touch with [Robert Botch, president of U.S. Gold], and he wanted me to send them over some lyrics. They sent me some music back, and we got together and they liked my work.



***PCE*: How did you get involved in the 49ers disc? I understand that you and Don Logan, CEO of developer Digital Sports, live next door to each other?**

WF: Basically, I was outside one day walking around. He came over and introduced himself and we started talking about what we did. I said, "I play football." He said he played computers. We became friends and came up with this concept of getting into the sports trading business.

What we think we've founded is a brand-new market, which is the Digital Sports Trading Disc. Instead of a flat card with a picture on the front and stats or something on the back, you get to interactively talk to your favorite player—and that's what we plan to do for the entire NFL and the rest of professional sports. That's what we started out doing, but we said: "Let's make it broader. Let's do something big first." And what better to do than the San Francisco 49ers?

***PCE*: What was it like making the 49ers disc?**

WF: The guys on the team were great. Everybody worked with me; they knew what I was trying to do. [Team president] Carmen Policy asked me what I needed. I said: "Carmen, I don't need anything financially. All I need is your blessing." He said, "You got it." And once he gave me that, all the doors were opened.

***PCE*: Do you think people will like trading discs better than trading cards?**

WF: Think about it: Cards are boring compared to a CD-ROM that you can pop into your computer and ask questions. You can't ask that card questions.

And when my personal interactive trading disc is released, you'll be able to see my little league highlights, my high school highlights, on through college and the NFL. Photos of my family. Background stuff that people never get to see.

I'm really excited about that, because everybody looks at [football players] and all they see is our helmets and our numbers. They know me as Bar None. I want people to know William Floyd. Nobody would have ever dreamed I'd be in this [field]: "Twenty-three years old and in the NFL. What's this kid doing worrying about starting a business and getting into this technology?"

news FLASH

- Think your 100MHz Pentium is as good as gaming gets? Intel doesn't. The leading chip maker wants you to upgrade to a sizzling 166MHz. The company says its new top-of-the-line **OverDrive** chips will boost performance some 50 percent. Likewise, owners of 75MHz and 90MHz Pentiums can accelerate to 125MHz and 150MHz, respectively. If you've got a 60MHz or 66MHz machine, you can double the speed to 120MHz or 133MHz. All this performance comes at a reasonable price: $399 for the lower-end OverDrives, available in March; and $499 for the 150MHz model and $679 for the 166MHz upgrade, both shipping in May. (Intel; 800-538-3373)
- Acer scored a hit with the slick industrial design of its Aspire line of green and gray home PCs. Now the computer maker adds muscle behind the good looks with the updated **Aspire II** line of computers. Due to ship this month, the machines will feature new motherboards, higher-end graphics, 6X CD-ROM drives, and 28.8Kbps modems, as well as faster Pentium 150 and 166 models. In August, the Aspire III arrives with brand-new technology, possibly including hardware MPEG video acceleration and 3-D graphics. (Acer; 800-368-2237)
- Virtual reality fans, get set to embark on a little **Net War**, the debut title for Ferris Productions' new **Cyber Unit XLR8^2** virtual-reality system. This futuristic battle game casts you as a warrior who must battle other fighters for Internet access. Move along hexagon-based terrain by simply turning your head, or go up and down via elevators with the XLR8's joystick. Look for Net War at arcades and family-entertainment centers near you. (Ferris Productions; 602-470-1177)

At the Old Online Ball Game

Major league baseball will do just about anything to regain its alienated fans. After a year of fan apathy, low attendance, and serious money losses in the wake of the 1994 player's strike, the sport is trying new marketing methods—and that includes going online.

Major League Baseball (MLB) maintains a World Wide Web site, aptly named @Bat, at **http://www.majorleaguebaseball.com/mlb/**. After a quiet launch last season, MLB has big plans for @Bat this year, says vice president of business development Michael Bernstein: "This will not just be dry information. Fans will be able to tap into official, timely information that will feature the prior day's games, including still shots, video, and audio."

@Bat will emphasize interactivity, says Bernstein, with chats, a feedback site where fans can address any baseball topic, and voting for the All-Star Game. MLB will also post samples of popular computer baseball games and feature links to at least 15 Web sites maintained by specific teams. MLB encourages clubs to go online, Bernstein says: "They can effectively address the local level, and the beauty of this medium is that you can serve your community in your backyard and around the world."

Another avenue for reaching the public is the commercial online services. CompuServe ran game-day promotions last year with the Cleveland Indians and the San Francisco Giants, and the Giants held an online conference with broadcaster Mike Krukow and second baseman Steve Scarsone. Expect similar events this season, says CompuServe's Jane Torbica.

Beyond official efforts, many fans maintain Web pages on their favorite teams; these run the gamut from sporadic to well-maintained. You can also keep tabs on the season with such news services as NandoNet's Baseball Server, the Sports Network from WAIS, ESPNet, or CNN Interactive (see adjacent list).

—Donald St. John

You can keep tabs on the 1996 baseball season via dozens of Web sites—from clubs' official sites to daily news roundups of the whole baseball scene. Here's a handy list:

TEAM SITES

Atlanta Braves: http://www.atlantabraves.com/
Cleveland Indians: http://www.indians.com/
Florida Marlins: http://pwr.com/Marlins/
New York Yankees: http://www.yankees.com/
Oakland A's: http://www.oaklandathletics.com/
Pittsburgh Pirates: http://www.pirateball.com/
San Francisco Giants: http://www.sman.com/
Seattle Mariners: http://www.mariners.org/
Toronto Blue Jays: http://www.bluejays.ca/bluejays/

NEWS ROUNDUP SITES

NandoNet Baseball Server:
http://www2.nando.net/SportServer/baseball/
The Sports Network: http://www.sportsnetwork.com/
ESPNet: http://espnet.sportszone.com/
CNN Interactive:
http://www.cnn.com/SPORTS/index.htm

Th-th-th-that's Not All, Folks

Back in the 1940s, who could have imagined hearing Superman radio serials over a personal computer? (Forget that–who could have imagined the personal computer?) Yet, 50 years later, those old broadcasts are among the many entertaining nuggets you can unearth at Warner Bros. new World Wide Web site.

Warner Bros. Online (http://www.warnerbros.com) encompasses most of the familiar WB material, from Looney Tunes characters such as Bugs Bunny to the huge Warners family of movies, TV shows, and record labels. There's also the inevitable online shopping zone, meant to complement the popular chain of WB mall outlets. And the site takes advantage of technologies such as RealAudio 2.0 to make archive material like the Superman broadcasts available.

But WB also aims to develop Web-specific content, particularly for women and kids, says Jim Moloshok, senior vice president at Warner Bros. Online. First among these is "Looney Tunes Karaoke," which grafts new words onto familiar songs courtesy of the Looney Tunes characters. Warner has also hopped onto the increasingly popular "send a card online" bandwagon, which lets you choose from card designs online and write a message; the site then sends an e-mail notification to the recipient.

–Donald St. John

Warner Bros.: from the silent movie era to the Internet.

Windows 95
The gaming platform of the future.
Did somebody spike my game?
Start
™ Tattoo it on your heart, Windows® 95 is a lethal cocktail of heightened graphics, magnified sound and cornea-burning speed. DirectX™ technology in Windows 95 for anyone in search of high-performance gaming capabilities on their PC. That means better graphics through hardware acceleration, better sound, and high-performance digital joystick control. You'd have to ride bareback on a screaming bullet to be connected any faster to the heart of your hardware. Now reality and the gaming world come shaken and stirred just the way you like it. For more information, go to http://www.microsoft.com/windows/games.
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off the WIRE

- You'll never have to miss Downtown Julie Brown's gossip show again, thanks to a deal between **c|net** and the **E!** cable television network to put E! on the World Wide Web. E! Online will develop Internet material from the network's shows (including the popular *Talk Soup* and reruns of David Letterman's NBC-era shows) as well as content created specifically for the site.
- **GEnie**, the forgotten online service, will try to reinvent itself with new owners. General Electric has finally unloaded GEnie—once a major online player but now down to fewer than 100,000 subscribers—to Yoville Renaissance, a New York investment firm. Yoville reportedly plans to take GEnie to the World Wide Web while maintaining the focus on games—one of the service's last remaining strengths.
- Feel like you've mastered the Web? Then you may be ready for **Hyper-G**, a second-generation Web-browsing protocol being developed at the University of Graz in Austria. Hyper-G includes support for multimedia right in the browser; you'll get MPEG movies and common sound formats such as Windows' .WAV and Sun's .AU. It also boosts support for languages other than English, and works fine with existing Net protocols such as http (the Web protocol), ftp, and gopher. You can find basic information on Hyper-G at **http://hyperg.iicm.tugraz.ac.at**. If you want to delve deeper into this new method, download Amadeus, a Hyper-G browser for Windows 3.1 and Win 95, from **ftp://ftp.iicm.tu-graz.ac.at/pub/Hyper-G/Amadeus**.

See This, Don't See That

Congress' controversial move toward an Internet indecency standard hasn't stopped the market for Net blocking software. On the contrary, blocking technologies have not only proliferated, they've become more sophisticated in how they screen content and in what other features they offer.

For example, NewView's **iscreen!** lets parents manage their kids' Internet viewing either by age default or by setting specific guidelines from a list of access criteria. That list includes the usual pornography-related items (nudity, sex, profanity), and also adds such categories as political or religious topics, alternative lifestyles, and financial transactions. NewView president Woodrow Hobbs says iscreen! aims not to tell people what they can or can't view at any level, but tries instead to leave the choice in parents' hands. (NewView; 415-299-9157; **http://www.newview.com**; $39.95/year)

Other blockers add full-on Web browsing and multimedia content geared for both kids and parents. **InterGO**, from Dallas-based TeacherSoft, is a current example. Like iscreen! InterGO features specific choice-based screening for parents, and it adds a Web browser linked to the TeacherSoft Web site. At the site you'll find news, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, a dictionary and thesaurus, and hundreds of full-text, public-domain literary works. "We want to keep an emphasis on the resources that the Internet can provide, while making it simple for parents to keep control over what their children can access," says TeacherSoft president Lyle Griffin. (TeacherSoft; 214-424-7882; **www.teachersoft.com**; $64.95) *—Donald St. John*

interGO's desktop acts as the guide to software that's both a Web browser and content screener.

A Grown-up Puppy

Cruised by Happy Puppy lately? The popular gaming-based World Wide Web site at http://happypuppy.com looks a little different these days. That's due to Happy Puppy's purchase by the Attitude Network, an Internet development firm that hopes to make Happy Puppy the cornerstone of an entertainment-based Web empire.

Attitude Network has remodeled the site, bringing in improved search functions, daily industry news, and RealAudio audio programming featuring the *Computer Fun Shop* radio show, which airs interviews with game creators and developers. Attitude Network president Bill Rasmussen was in on the founding days of ESPN and believes the Web is a lot like those freewheeling, idea-driven early days of the cable industry.

"Every time you turned, there was a new thing happening, and that's what we see with the Web," Rasmussen says. He adds that Happy Puppy should continue to grow and change based on input from site visitors; ties into radio and television programming are also likely. In the meantime, Attitude Network staffers hope to have the firm's next site nailed down by summer. *–Donald St. John*

The Happy Puppy gaming site on the World Wide Web offers new content and a revamped look.

Take 2 CD-ROMs for $9.95 ea.

Plus 1 more at great savings! (See details below.)

OVER 60 GREAT TITLES TO CHOOSE FROM NOW... OVER 500 ONCE YOU JOIN THE CLUB!

NEW

Phantasmagoria
Adventure 5004502
WIN3 1 or DOS, 486/66, 8mb, M

Casper Brainy Book
Children's Ed 5048905
WIN3 1 486 4mb or MAC LCIII 8mb, M

Doom II
Arcade Style 5021506
DOS 386/33 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M, J, K

Nascar Racing
Driving Sim 5001300
DOS 386/40, 8mb, M, J, K

Woodruff And The Schnibble
Adventure 5037304
WIN3 1 486, 4mb, M

Resume Maker Deluxe NEW
Home/Personal 5050703
WIN3 1 386/33, 8mb, M, K, P

The Lost Mind Of Dr. Brain
Children's Ed 5037502
WIN3 1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride
Arcade Style 5024401
WIN3.1 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Jumpstart Kindergarten
Children's Ed 5027701
WIN3 1 386 1mb or MAC LCIII 4mb, M

The Daedalus Encounter
Interact Game 5034707
WIN3 1 486/33 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M,K

World Wide Web Directory
Internet Guide 5049002
WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M

The Incredible Machine 3
Strategy Game 5043302
WIN3.1 386 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M

Jammit
PC Propad included
Sports Game 5034301
WIN3 1 386/25, 4mb, M,J,K

Golf Digest's Best Places To Play
Sports 5045208
WIN3.1 486, 4mb, M

Allied General
Strategy Game 5054903
WIN3 1 486/33, 8mb, M

NEW NEW

Mechwarrior 2
Arcade Style 5043609
DOS 486/66, 8mb, M

The Sports Illustrated Multimedia Almanac
Sports 5036504
WIN3 1 386/25 or MAC II, 4mb, M

Martial Arts Explorer
Historical 5049804
WIN3 1 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Let's Pretend NEW
Children's Ed 5056304
WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M

7th Guest
Interact Game 5004700
DOS 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

AAA Trip Planner
Travel 5011606
WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M, P

McKenzie & Co./ Games For Her NEW
Adventure 5052808
WIN3.1 486/50, 8mb, M

The Civil War
Strategy Game 5042601
DOS 386/33, 4mb, M

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing 4.0
Typing Tutor 5052402
WIN3 1 386/33, 4mb, M,K

Mixed Up Mother Goose Deluxe
Children's Ed 5042304
WIN3 1 386 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M

Mindscape Complete Reference Library
Home/Personal 5037106
WIN3 1 386/33, 8mb, M

Dr. Ruth's Encyclopedia Of Sex
Home/Personal 5027602
WIN3 1 486, 4mb, M

Locus NEW
Arcade Style 5055702
WIN3 1 486/66 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M, J, K

Ice & Fire NEW
Arcade Style 5055801
WIN3 1 486/66 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M, J, K

Microsoft Bookshelf
Gen. Reference 5009402
WIN3 1 386 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M,K

Compton's Encyclopedia
Encyclopedia 5046008
WIN3 1 386 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M

Shanghai Great Moments
Strategy Game 5031802
WIN3 1 486/33 or MAC LCII, 8mb, M

Police Quest: Open Season
Adventure 5002803
DOS 386 4mb or MAC LC 8mb, M

Cannon Fodder
Strategy Game 5035506
WIN3 1 386, 4mb, M

Print Artist 3.0 NEW
Home/Personal 5051404
WIN3.1 386/25, 4mb, M, K, P

Jumpstart First Grade
Children's Ed 5045901
WIN3 1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Beer Hunter
Gen. Interest 5040803
WIN3 1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Trivial Pursuit
Strategy Game 5027404
WIN3 1 386 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

The Greatest Paper Airplanes
General Interest 5044003
WIN3 1 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Jumpstart Preschool
Children's Ed 5051305
WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Astronomica
Astronomy 5033600
WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

FX Fighter
Arcade Style 5045109
DOS 486/33, 4mb, M

ADI's 4th & 5th Grade English NEW
Children's Ed 5053301
WIN3 1 486/33 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M

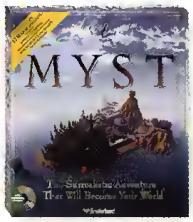
ADI's 2nd & 3rd Grade English NEW
Children's Ed 5052006
WIN3 1 486/33 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M

Instant Internet Access
Internet Guide 5031000
WIN3 1 386, 4mb, M

The Complete Multimedia Bible
Bible Reference 5031703
WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M

Navy Strike
Flight Simulation 5051909
DOS 486/66, 4mb, M, J, K

How Multimedia Computers Work
General Ref 5044300
WIN3 1 386/33, 4mb, M



Myst
Interact Game 5004304
WIN3 1 386/33 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M

The Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed
Arcade Style 5044409
DOS 386/33, 4mb, M

Mortal Kombat III NEW
Arcade Style 5052501
DOS 486/33, 8mb, M, J, K

X-Men Cartoon Maker
Video Interactive 5050901
WIN3.1 486, 4mb, M

Berlitz Live Spanish
Language Tutor 5043401
WIN3.1 386 or MAC Classic, 4mb, M

Superkarts
Arcade Style 5040704
DOS 386/33, 4mb, M, J, K

NEW

Command & Conquer
Strategy Game 5050208
DOS 486/66, 8mb, M

1001 Really Cool Web Sites
Internet Guide 5053004
WIN3 1 386 or MAC Classic, 4mb, M, K

Outpost
Strategy Game 5007703
WIN3 1 386 4mb or MAC LCII 8mb, M

Bridge Barron
Strategy Game 5045307
WIN3 1 286 or MAC LCII, 1mb, M

Explorers Of The New World
Historical 5053707
WIN3 1 486 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M

How Animals Move
Animals 5041207
WIN3 1 386 4mb or MAC LCII 8mb, M

The Pagemaster
Adventure 5027008
WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

Gone Fishin'
Arcade Style 5049200
DOS 386/33, 4mb, M

Corel Gallery
Clip Art Library 5010301
WIN3 1 386, 4mb, M, K, P

Beethoven's 5th NEW
Music 5053905
WIN3 1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M

How Your Body Works
Medical Ref 5044201
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Leader BOARD

The best-selling PC and Mac games and multimedia entertainment software

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness explodes onto the PC Games list.

Stauf makes his encore appearance in The 11th Hour, on both the PC and Mac Games lists.

PC Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this venerable adventure at the top of the Leader Board. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	1	20	★★★★★
2	**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** Crisp graphics, challenging game play, and multiplayer capabilities place this excellent Orc-vs.-Human epic near the top of the Board. (Blizzard Entertainment; DOS CD; 800-953-7669; $50)	–	1	★★★★★
3	**Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire** Engage the Evil Empire in your X-Wing fighter through 15 daring missions. May the Force be with you. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; DOS CD; $54.95)	–	1	★★★★
4	**The 11th Hour** Stauf's back as a spiteful wraith in this long-awaited sequel to The 7th Guest. Puzzles, games, and TV-quality video keep you on your toes. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.99)	–	1	★★★★
5	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** Upgraded graphics and new features keep this hugely popular flight sim near the top of the Board. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	3	6	★★★★
6	**Hexen** New monsters, simple puzzles, and a bit of role playing give a fresh look to this solid Doom-style game. (GT Interactive; 800-434-2637; DOS CD; $49)	2	2	★★★1/2
7	**The Dig** As you explore a rogue asteroid, you'll find there's much more to this rock than meets the eye. (LucasArts Entertainment, 800-782-7927; DOS CD; $44.95)	–	1	★★★★
8	**The Ultimate Doom Thy Flesh Consumed** All three original episodes of Doom, plus nine perilous new levels, on one action-packed CD-ROM. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS CD; $30)	8	5	–
9	**FPS: Football Pro '96** Get NFL visuals and arcade action in the latest edition of this PC football game. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; DOS CD; $59.95)	–	1	★★★★
10	**Monopoly Deluxe** Great graphics, sound, and animations—plus Internet play—breathe new life into this classic board game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS, Windows, Win CD; $39.99)	10	5	★★★★

Mac Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this venerable adventure at the top of the Leader Board. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Mac CD; $54.95)	1	25	★★★★★
2	**Doom II** Doom arrives on the Mac in this hair-raising sequel, complete with more than 30 levels and 7 hellish new creatures. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; Mac, Mac CD; street price $40–$50)	2	6	★★★★1/2
3	**Dark Forces** A clever twist on the Doom concept, featuring more strategy and a cast of *Star Wars* characters—now for the Mac. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; street price $44.95)	3	6	★★★★1/2
4	**SimCity 2000** Build your own city of the future with this improved version of the classic urban-simulation game. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac, $49.95; Mac CD, $69.95)	5	25	★★★★★
5	**The 11th Hour** Stauf's back as a spiteful wraith in this long-awaited sequel to The 7th Guest. Puzzles, games, and TV-quality video keep you on your toes. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; Mac CD; $59.99)	–	1	★★★★
6	**Marathon 2: Durandal** Improved game play and graphics make eliminating the insidious Pfhor even more fun. (Bungie Software; 800-295-0060; Mac, Mac CD; $48)	7	2	–
7	**Links Pro CD Macintosh** Photorealistic courses and players as well as humorous sound bites set this groundbreaking golf game apart. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; Mac; $69.95)	9	11	★★★★
8	**Rebel Assault** Intense graphics and furious *Star Wars* action highlight this classic shooter. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; $19.95)	4	14	★★★★
9	**F/A-18 Hornet 2.0** Excellent graphics, voice messages, and enhanced instrumentation make this one of the best flight sims on the market. (Graphic Simulations; 246-386-7575; Mac, Power Mac; $45)	–	1	★★★★★
10	**Descent** Pilot an awesome craft as you battle enemy robots and search for hostages in off-world mines. (MacPlay, 800-969-4263; Mac CD; $49.95)	–	1	★★★★

Multimedia Entertainment Titles

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**The Lion King Activity Center** Kids can join their favorite characters from the hit animated film in an entertaining mix of games and activities. (Disney Interactive; 800-228-0988; Win CD, Mac CD; $30)	–	1	★★★★
2	**Disney's Animated StoryBook: Pocahontas** Relive the life and times of Pocahontas through the eyes of Disney. (Disney Interactive; 800-228-0988; Win CD, Mac CD; $30)	–	1	★★1/2
3	**Microsoft Encarta** The latest installment of the best-selling encyclopedia features online updates and more videos, photos, articles, and maps. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, Mac CD; $54.95)	1	22	★★★★ 1/2
4	**Disney's Animated StoryBook: Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree** Introduce your children to Pooh Bear in one of his classic misadventures. (Disney Interactive; 800-688-1520; Win CD, Mac CD; $32.95)	2	4	★★★★ 1/2
5	**Dr. Seuss's ABC's** Favorites Icabod and Izzy host this alphabet soup full of silly characters and clever animations. (Living Books; 800-776-4724; Win/Mac CD, Win 95 CD, Power Mac CD; $37)	4	3	★★★★★

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games and multimedia entertainment titles in 1,300 retail stores for December 1995. It excludes CD "packs" that contain both games and multimedia titles, generally composed of older products. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data

WINDOWS® 95 version
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out performs both

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PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

★★★★★

"5 out of 5"
Computer Gaming World

GOLDEN TRIAD AWARD
Computer Gaming Review

"A great game. A sleek, fast moving combo of MOM and WLII."
Wade Glasscock–CompuServe

"I've probably spent over a grand on games and I gotta say that this is the BEST yet! I've been spending too much time playing and not sleeping, my hat's off to New World.
Scary.Jerry–CompuServe

"One of the most enjoyable games of the year."
Ned Gaskins–PC Gamer

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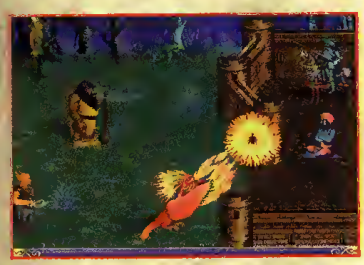

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Steve Klett

Network Play Not Enough

Lately, The Ref has noticed what could be the beginning of a disturbing trend: There are a lot of so-so computer games out there that are reaping tons of praise simply because they're such great fun to play over a network or modem connection.

Naturally, these multiplayer games are selling well, and thus the inclusion of network support appears to be foremost in game developers' minds. And, given the amount of flak LucasArts has received for not including net play in Dark Forces, who can really blame them?

However, in their zeal to get a game out the door that we can play with all our friends, it seems some companies are failing to concentrate on the most important element of computer gaming itself: challenging and absorbing solo play.

Don't get me wrong—I love blowing up my pals in a rousing Doom Deathmatch or a grueling Fighter Duel dogfight. But great network play alone does not necessarily guarantee a great game.

Take Command & Conquer, for instance. That's right, Command & Conquer—the hyper-popular, real-time wargame that's sold more than 600,000 copies in a little over six months.

Clearly, many of you will disagree, but C & C could have been so much more satisfying if it had more creative mission designs, improved artificial intelligence, and better graphics.

Some games rely on the intelligence of human opponents to make up for their own shortcomings.

In solo play, the game becomes merely a question of building up a larger force than the computer's and then mounting a massive assault. Except for one or two missions in which the game limits your resources, you don't need to do anything else to win. The computer never even tries to mount a serious attack on your position. Instead, it dribbles out squads of five or six men at a time, perhaps supported with a tank, which then foolishly throw themselves at your force of 20-odd tanks and a hundred or so men. (The soldiers should also have the good sense to get out of the way of a tank bearing down on them without my having to kick them in the pants.)

Sure, the game's a real time-sucker in head-to-head play, but that merely highlights the sad fact that its solo play is lacking in so many areas. The game relies on the intelligence of human players to make up for its shortcomings, in which case I say the consumer at least deserves a price break.

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM VANDERHOOF

I'm not trying to single out C & C; plenty of other recent titles share this problem. Domark's Tank Commander, Novalogic's Commanche Vs. Werewolf, Virgin's Zone Raiders, Bullfrog's Hi-Octane, Philips' Fighter Duel, and even Blizzard's Warcraft II (though to a much lesser extent) spring to mind.

What game companies and reviewers seem to forget is that many computer game enthusiasts either can't play games on the office network or don't have an office network at all. Some players may be the only one of their particular circle of friends who owns a computer. And unless you know some local competition, those long-distance phone bills can balloon out of control after only a few hours of modem play.

The situation isn't hopeless. Some games do achieve the proper blend of challenging solo action and varied network play, as demonstrated by 3D Realms' new Doom-style Duke Nukem 3D (see story, page 30), or even Doom II or Marathon. Companies simply need to put equal time and thought into both sides of the equation.

If they feel too much pressure to get a title out the door, game makers should concentrate on perfecting solo play first and add network support later, the way Activision has done with MechWarrior 2 and Bethesda is doing with Terminator: Future Shock.

Worst-case scenario: Leave the network play out if you must and give me one helluva standalone game. I'll take LucasArts' Dark Forces or Origin's CyberMage over Apogee's Rise Of The Triad any day, with no complaints.

Network play should be the icing used to top off a great game, not a crutch the game depends upon to be fun.

The Ref welcomes your comments. E-mail him at sklett@iftw.com.

"The trail was colder than an icebox in an igloo. I had a list of shady suspects longer than my bar bill at the Dew Drop Inn. But I was on to something. She was 5 feet 4 inches of trouble and I was just an inch away from being 6 feet under."

The Dame Was Loaded is about lust, danger, diamonds, deceit. And it's about time. Finally, '40s *film noir* and full-screen video make their debut on PC CD-ROM. You're Scott Anger – a skirt-chasing, wise-cracking, piece-packing LA P.I.– here to unravel a plot with more curves than the enticing young widow. The trick is to gamble for clues and work to one of 9 gripping climaxes. Remember, this dame could make you filthy rich. Or just make you dead.

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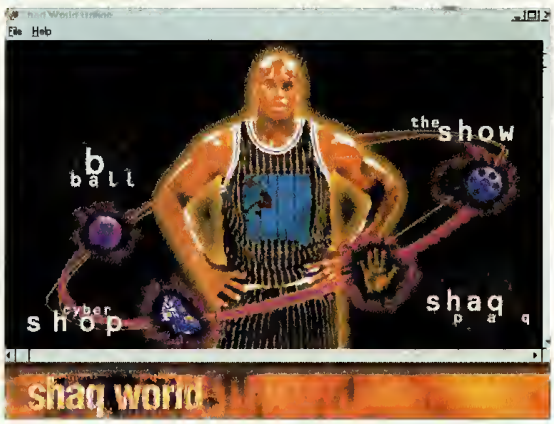
PHILIPS

Donald St. John

Microsoft Buys Into the Web

The last time Wirehead saw a gorilla on a diet, it was more than 25 years ago at the Philadelphia Zoo.

But now, along with the rest of the online world, I'm watching Microsoft, the 500-pound gorilla of the computer industry, change an online strategy that seemed an early and smashing success. Realizing the worst fears of online leaders America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy, the Microsoft Network (MSN) has had no problem grabbing subscribers since its debut last August as an old-fashioned proprietary online service.



Shaq—a man bigger than Bill Gates, if not quite as rich.

In fact, MSN is up near 750,000 subscribers and still adding both members and content. So why change? Because Bill Gates says so. Gates saw the Internet light in a big, bright way last year and decreed that Microsoft make its entire product line Net-compatible. In part, that's because he feels it has to, but it's also because Gates sees opportunity on the World Wide Web for more of the two things he likes best—money and control. Thus, at MSN, "www.msn.com" is the most important word right now.

For MSN, this strategy is something of an acknowledgment that no proprietary service can compete with the expansive Internet; there's just too much fun to be had out there for the mere cost of an Internet connection. Microsoft is not the only one reacting to this fact of life, of course: Apple's moribund eWorld, MCI/News Corp. Online (the former Delphi), and AT&T Interchange are also becoming Web-o-centric services, and the larger services continue to scramble to bolster their Net presence.

At the Microsoft Network, www.msn.com is THE word right now.

But Microsoft was doing well with MSN, even after the initial Windows 95 hoopla (and in the face of lower-than-expected post-hoopla sales of Win 95), so it's telling that the folks in Redmond have also chosen to go this route. They clearly think they can make good bucks with a Web presence, and that idea is at least partly built on a base of entertainment.

See, Microsoft has come to believe in the power of the franchise—the big name, the large organization, the "mine is better/cooler/more cutting-edge than yours" approach. Consider its entertainment content: While MSN is populated with the same kinds of interest-based forums that you'll find on AOL or CompuServe, the service particularly focuses on big names—lots of 'em. It has the entire family of NBC offerings, enticed away from America Online. It has *USA Today*. It has ESPN, via ESPNet, the online sports service started by the former Microsofties at Starwave. It has Shaquille O'Neal's Shaq World, where you can track the big hoopster's basketball progress and listen to clips of his rap tunes. Hell, it's got Geraldo Rivera. And when Microsoft starts something new, it doesn't start small: MSN's upcoming political magazine won't be helmed by some unknown, but by superconnected Washington insider Michael Kinsley.

The thing is, big names cost big money. So, even as MSN becomes Web-available, you'll still have to pay entrance fees to get to the key services. Of course, right now you're stuck using MSN as your Internet service provider and Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser if you want to get to anything on MSN, regardless of whether it's free or warrants a fee. While that situation won't last long, the fees definitely will.

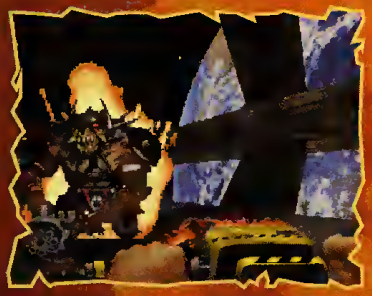
This all sets up a situation that may result in a two-tiered Web—one that's free and one that's not. Even now, you're starting to see the hottest first-generation sites—such as Happy Puppy (see Online News, page 18) and Hollywood Online—get snapped up by deep-pockets buyers. That's not necessarily bad, and it doesn't always mean you'll get charged for using them. But as the online services make their way onto the Internet, they're not going to give up the pursuit of profit.

Anything Microsoft can bring under its umbrella to make itself more necessary and ubiquitous on the Internet is a good target for corporate ownership—and eventual fees. The buying frenzy could spin out of control if other well-heeled online providers looking to establish themselves (read: Rupert Murdoch and MCI/News Corp.) start buying up content. MSN on the Web may seem like a compromise, but it may well be a pay-for-play Trojan Horse within the walls of a mostly free World Wide Web.

About those opinions...send 'em to Wirehead at dstjohn@iftw.com or e2online@aol.com.

"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus



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3D Realms™ REALITY IS OUR GAME.™

Christine Grech

Dog Disc Afternoon

You know the old saying, how dog is man's best friend? Well, I never paid much attention to that. After all, the Multimaniac has her own faithful companion, her computer. Thanks to the wide variety of multimedia programs and games out there, it's always at my side, obediently filling my leisure hours. And unlike a dog, it never needs grooming, feeding, or walking.

Okay, okay, so it does demand constant upgrading, fiddling, and cajoling. Hmm. Maybe a dog would be easier after all.

No need to make a hasty decision. I can use my current best friend to help me shop for its successor with a pair of pooch-oriented CD-ROMs. First up is the family-oriented Microsoft Dogs, a general reference about the history, care, and selection of 250 breeds. Dogs has five sections: Breeds, Origins, Care, Guides, and an Index. Since I wanted help choosing the right kind of dog, I jumped to Breeds and selected the Canine Companion.

Which breed is best for the Maniac—the dachshund or the petit basset griffin vendeen?

Two talking dogs named Fist and Fetch asked eight questions about what I want in a dog. How many hours a day would the dog be home alone? What type of exercise commitment could I make? How much time would I be willing to spend on grooming? How much experience did I have with dogs?

I'm not quite ready to trade in my computer for a pup.

I selected the choices that best matched my situation, then clicked on the Fetch button. As the hourglass chugged onscreen for a few seconds, I wondered what kind of dog would be perfect for me—something unusual like the komondor or the shuba inu? Nothing so exotic for me; my three-bone match (the best possible) is a dachshund.

I read a short summary about dachshunds and saw a couple of adorable pictures. But that was about it—nothing else specifically about dachshunds. I returned to check out the rest of the disc.

It consists of collage screens that have jumping-off points to related topics. A screen on Choosing a Dog, for example, branches to narrated presentations titled Town and Country, A Perfect Match, and The Long and Short of It. All this jumping is an enjoyable way to browse through the disc, but it can get frustrating when you lose your starting point.

Interesting enough info, but I couldn't quite picture myself with a wiener dog. Time for a second opinion, this one from Inroads Interactive's Multimedia Dogs. Laid out similarly to Microsoft Dogs, Multimedia Dogs' Fetch feature uses a set of slider controls that cover slightly different concerns—more about the dog than me. I registered my preferences for Size, Living Space, Training, Activity Level, Disposition, Shedding, Behavior with Kids, and Home Protection. And fetch...

I got a list of the program's 170 breeds ranked in order of a best match. For me, there was no such thing as a perfect 10, and the best I could do was an 8—make that seven 8s. From a border collie to a Tibetan terrier, each of these dogs closely matched my criteria (read: no wiener dog). But it's not as simple as that. While I'd like a border collie, upon closer study I found that it's a good match in all areas but Living Space; it practically needs a ranch, not my small apartment.

After reading articles, viewing pictures, and watching videos of the other six breeds, I settled on the petit basset griffin vendeen. What a great name, and what a cute dog. Multimedia Dogs even provides a list of breeders. The disc also has a wealth of basic dog info, but since it's presented in screen after screen of scrolling text, it's hard to assimilate.

After all this doggone research, I'm still not ready to trade in my computer for a pup. These discs are a fine starting point, but I've still got lots of questions. Neither program offers much in the way of specific breed advice; I'd be better off with one of those books from the pet store. Another serious shortcoming: They don't consider cost as a factor, nor do they give any estimates for the various breeds. Still, dog owners and dog lovers will find both discs informative and entertaining. (Microsoft Dogs; Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, $34.95; Multimedia Dogs; Inroads Interactive; 800-722-7627; Mac/Win CD, $29.95)

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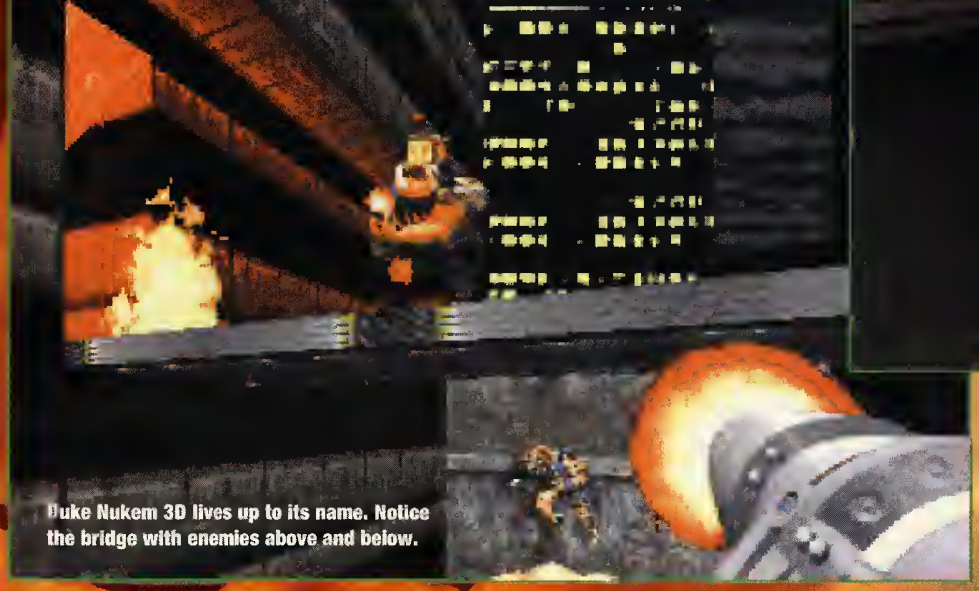
DUKE NUKEM 3D EXPOSED!

By Steve Klett

PC Entertainment takes an exclusive look at one of the year's hottest 3-D action games.



Duke Nukem 3D lives up to its name. Notice the bridge with enemies above and below.

To play the shareware version of Duke Nukem 3D, visit *PC Entertainment*'s Web site (**www.pcentertainment.com**) or 3D Realms' own Web page (**www.3drealms.com**), look for it on an upcoming *PC Entertainment* CD-ROM, or visit your local software store.

Duke surveys the surrounding carnage with smug satisfaction. Bits and pieces of dead aliens litter the ground in all directions. Once again, he's saved the Earth. Time for some well-earned R&R. Yup, a good cigar, a full bottle of whiskey, and, of course, a little female companionship are just what he needs.

It's a shame, but he's going to have to cancel that little vacation. At this very moment, hordes of aliens are invading Los Angeles, taking over the police department and terrorizing pedestrians. Once again, only one man can save the Earth from a horrible fate.

"Don't those bastards ever learn?" Duke mutters to himself. "Oh well—time to kick the ass of yet another alien race. L.A., here I come."

No, this isn't the storyline for Arnold Schwarzenegger's next action flick. It's the plot for Duke Nukem 3D, the highly anticipated first-person action game from 3D Realms. And you'd better brace yourself: Not only does Duke 3D surpass the content and technology of its two side-scrolling predecessors, it also leapfrogs all current Doom-style action games in game play, humor, carnage, and controversy.

PC Entertainment recently hopped down to Dallas to visit with 3D Realms, a division of Apogee Software, for an exclusive first look at one of the year's top 3-D action games.

Distract those aliens with a movie, and then let 'em have it.

Airborne and ground-hugging PigCops harass Duke throughout the first episode, L.A. Meltdown.

This Ain't No Stinkin' Doom Clone

Now, you probably think you've seen it all when it comes to Doom-style games. There couldn't possibly be any room left for originality, right? Well, guess again. Its storyline may be razor-thin, but Duke 3D takes the best elements from such previous hits as Doom II, Dark Forces, and CyberMage and combines them with a healthy dose of brand-new ideas. The result is a unique gaming experience.

The shareware version of Duke 3D has been available since February and consists of the first game episode (see review below). The full retail version of the game, slated to ship this month, will include two more episodes for a total of some 26 to 30 levels.

Based on 3D Realms' Build engine, which served as the basis of games such as Witchaven and Tekwar, Duke 3D's environment is truly three-dimensional. That means you can look up and down, slide left and right, jump and crawl, cross bridges, and evade enemies above and below you, and even fly with the aid of a jet pack. You'll engage hordes of aliens inside buildings, on the streets, in the air, underwater, and below ground—all in a single level. 3D Realms plans to include level-editor software with the retail version of Duke Nukem 3D that will make creating your own custom levels almost as easy as pointing and clicking your mouse. Look for more details in an upcoming issue.

And, unlike the aforementioned competition, Duke's Build engine lets its game environment have sloped ceilings, walls, and objects, which work subtly to give Duke Nukem a look all its own. Only Bethesda's The Terminator: Future Shock offers similar capabilities, though to a much lesser extent.

But Duke's biggest advantage over other Doom-style games is its play. Apogee built in network support for up to eight players at once (four in the shareware version), and you can play cooperatively against the aliens or indulge in deathmatches. A tally board records each player's kills and how many times each player dies.

You get all the death-dealing toys you could ask for, including a trusty .45-caliber automatic pistol, pump-action shotgun, three-barrel machine gun, rocket-propelled grenade launcher, and fuse-lit pipe-bombs. And you can switch to an overhead view or third-person perspective if all that first-person head-bobbing makes you queasy.

Duke can also get a sneak peak of unexplored areas or get a fix on the enemy by using various video terminals to monitor a level's security cameras. Clever touches like laser-tripped mines, shrink guns, and holograms enhance multiplayer matches by bringing more strategy into play. Like the hologram in Schwarzenegger's *Total Recall*, the HoloDuke lets you project an image of Duke that'll draw fire from enemies. You can also set trip mines in doorways to booby-trap pursuers. Hit an enemy

Duke Nukem 3D (shareware version)

Duke Nukem 3D greets the world in a shareware version, which includes L.A. Meltdown, the first of three episodes in the full game. This is where Duke first encounters the alien race that is ravaging the city. Simply put, your job is to kill 'em all, using any means necessary.

L.A. Meltdown comprises five levels—plus a sixth, secret level—that take Duke from the mean streets of Los Angeles to the heart of the San Andreas fault. The next two episodes in the retail version will reveal exactly what the aliens are up to. But even the shareware version offers a number of large locales to conquer, including the mean city streets, a seedy nightclub, and a prison complex.

In addition to the standard first-person perspective, you can play the game from an overhead view and a third-person view. You get access to six of the full game's nine weapons, which include a machine gun, shotgun, pistol, and grenade launcher (the shrink gun, laser-tripped mines, and laser gun will be added in the retail version). Four skill levels let you control how hot the action gets.

The game also sports a unique inventory system that lets you use full or partial amounts of items such as medkits. For example, if your health is at 50% when you use a kit, you get to save the leftover 50% for later.

Apogee includes modem, serial, and network support for up to four players at once (the full version will support eight players), who can play cooperatively against the aliens or fight among themselves in a series of deathmatches. Duke's superb voice adds a special touch, radiating his hallmark icy confidence.

Besides offering the best 3-D world on the market, Duke Nukem 3D provides simple controls, good graphics, great sounds, and rampant humor—though mostly in a dark, sick vein. Duke seems to get a special kick out of surprising aliens sitting on the toilet, for instance.

So be warned: The game is extremely violent and includes elements that may offend the politcally correct crowd. But if you liked Doom, you'll love Duke Nukem 3D. —*Steve Klett*

CHEATS

Having trouble exterminating the alien threat? Type these cheats during game play to give Duke some extra juice:

God mode: DNKROZ

All items/weapons: DNSTUFF

Level warp: DNSCOTTY1X (where X is the number of the level you want to visit)

Duke Nukem 3D (shareware)

FormGen

800-263-2390

Developer: 3D Realms
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8M8 RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA

GAME PLAY:	★★★★★
GETTING STARTED:	★★★★★
GRAPHICS:	★★★★
SOUND CHECK:	★★★★ 1/2
VALUE:	★★★★★

Duke Nukem 3D sports the fastest, funniest, and goriest 3-D action around.

Detail shines throughout the game: Notice the flying shells and pools of blood on the walls and floor.

The Build engine's ability to draw sloped surfaces makes for some cool game environments.

with the shrink gun and you can extinguish its life with the heel of your boot. (The mines and shrink weapon are available only in the full retail version of the game.)

Real Tough

Thankfully, 3D Realms has put equal effort into making sure the game provides the highest level of enjoyment in solo play. Advanced artificial intelligence makes Duke's adversaries tough competition. Aliens will crouch and fire, and they'll zig-zag, crouch, and teleport to evade your fire. They'll test the limits of Duke's fighting—and thinking—abilities from the get-go.

"We've worked hard to create real environments with objects you'd expect to see, and with which the player can interact," says George Broussard, president of 3D Realms.

For example, in the first few levels of the game, you'll encounter a working movie projector in a theater, a pool table in a bar, and dancing girls in a club—all of which are interactive. Turn on the projector and you're treated to a short flick (hmm, this must be one of them adult theaters), or slip the go-go girls some cash and you'll get a PG-13–rated surprise. There are so many similar objects and hidden secrets that "you can play the game through 50 to 100 times and probably not see everything," boasts Apogee president Scott Miller.

Of course, the heightened realism means you'd better steel yourself for the most gore you've seen in any action game to date. Shoot an alien with the shotgun and blood will splatter on the walls and seep downward. Or the creature will slump to the ground with a gurgling throat wound as he dies a slow death. Hit an enemy with the rocket launcher and bloody body parts explode all over the screen.

What's Next?

Texas, home to both id Software and 3D Realms, ought to call itself "The 3-D Gaming State."

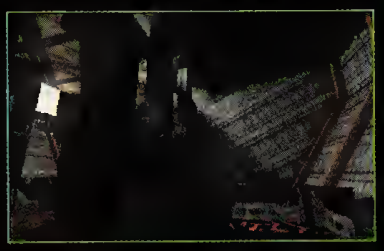
Who rules in Lone Star country? Well, with a barrage of new titles, plus Quake on the way (see Game News, page 11), id looks strong. But 3D Realms is prepping some serious challengers.

Topping the list is Prey, a 3-D action game based on the company's third-generation 3-D game engine. Prey looks very similar to what we've seen of Quake. You'll be able to look and move in three directions (you'll be able to turn your head without moving). Also, texture-mapped, polygon-based enemies and dynamic lighting effects such as translucent light beams will add to the realism.

The story—if you care—goes something like this: You're abducted by aliens and taken to their world to be the prey in a sadistic hunting game. Look for Prey anytime from Christmas through next spring.

3D Realms also plans to release a pair of games based on Duke's Build engine this summer. The first is Shadow Warrior, a first-person action game in which you play a ninja. As in Duke, you'll basically run around and kill everything using shurikens, crossbows with explosive bolts, and Uzis. You'll also get to use your enemy's body parts as weapons.

Then there's Blood, a Heretic-like action game set in a mansion overrun with the undead. Blood's prime attraction is a voodoo doll that you can use to impart an extremely painful death upon your enemies. *—Steve Klett*



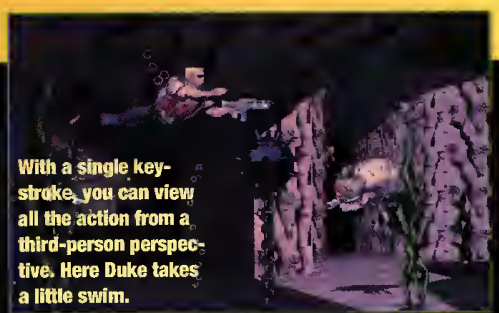
Prey looks to be Quake's technical rival. Check out the awesome lighting effects.

And that's not all. Walk through a pool of blood from a slain enemy and you'll track bloody footprints for several yards (a great way to locate an opponent in head-to-head play). 3D Realms is even thinking of carrying this concept a bit further in the retail version with alien fecal matter. Also, while Duke is generally a picture of calm, he occasionally mutters an expletive or two when things get particularly hairy.

Duke 3D "is definitely a game for grown-ups," says Miller. "We're not pulling any punches or shying away from controversy. In fact, we're doing quite the opposite." (Parents can enable a lockout feature to make the game as PG as possible, removing the dancing girls, swear words, and much of the gore.)

However you decide to play it, Duke Nukem 3D offers challenge, replayability, and laughs. Try it—if you think you can handle it. (FormGen; 800-263-2390; DOS CD; $39.99 for retail version) ■

Find the rocket-propelled grenade, and Duke can have scrambled aliens for breakfast.



With a single keystroke, you can view all the action from a third-person perspective. Here Duke takes a little swim.

State of

By Christine Grech

Virtual museums on CD-ROM let you gallery-hop from the comfort of your computer.

What do art museums and computer games have in common? Both can make your eyes glaze over if you spend too much time in them.

So stop torturing yourself because you haven't made it to the Met lately. Turn your computer into a super-museum with your own private collection of art CD-ROMs.

Now, don't get too excited. These discs can't quite match the awesome experience of standing eye to eye with the Mona Lisa. But they're a great alternative if you can't make it to Paris this year. And even if you do make it to a real museum, art discs can help make the experience more enjoyable.

Whether you want to learn more about famous pieces of art, peek into the private lives of your favorite artists, get a little historical perspective, or just look at some pretty pictures, these discs easily outdo your average coffee-table art book. Books don't let you zoom in to get a detailed look at the Sistine Chapel, ponder the question of whether Freud was right about Leonardo's childhood as you study his works, or let you seamlessly jump from the Louvre's Medici Gallery to the Pyramid's Napoleon Hall.

But if you want to end up in a digital masterpiece, you need to tour our gallery of the virtual galleries. We spotlight the top art titles to tell you who's got what, whether it's any good, and why you should care. And if you've got a specific interest, see "Also Showing," on page 37.

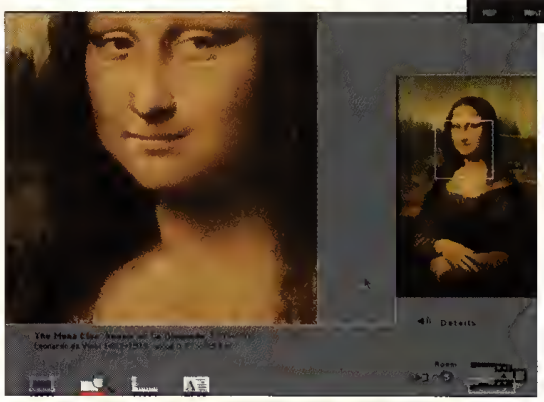
Le Louvre

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★★

The Louvre museum houses the greatest art collection in the world—and Montparnasse Multimedia's Le Louvre CD-ROM is the best, most comprehensive fine-art disc you can buy. While the 300 magnificent works of art from the museum's 6,000-piece collection provide a strong starting point, the well-thought-out design and detailed treatment are what really make the title shine.

The disc takes a two-pronged approach: The Palace itself and its Collections. If you're preparing for an actual trip to the Louvre, exploring the title by the museum's layout makes sense. You can learn about the Louvre's evolution from 12th-century fortress to international treasure via a floorplan that takes you to its various rooms. Or go straight to the various collections, which are broken down into manageable chunks organized by time period (French School 18th-century works, for example). Le Louvre's well-organized index—grouped by Paintings, Rooms, and Biographies—offers yet a third way to visit the virtual museum.

However you choose to browse, each painting is accompanied by a wealth of information: a general audio commentary; a zoom feature with detailed audio commentary; a scale screen that shows its relative size; a link to the artist's biography; and the Apropos text screen, which offers an interesting (and often humorous) anecdote about the work. Le Louvre enhances understanding by frequently illustrating the audio commentary with interactive bits. When Composition is the subject, for example, the program uses an electronic chalkboard to annotate the painting. The title's only limitation is a lack of search and print capabilities.



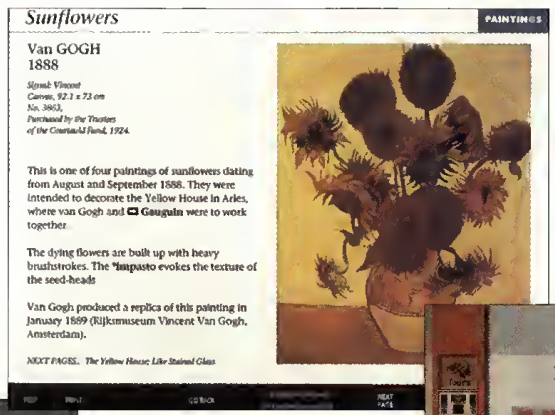
Get up close and personal with Mona Lisa—and 299 other works—in Le Louvre.

Le Louvre is a multimedia masterpiece, perfect for both serious and casual art lovers.

Microsoft Art Gallery

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★★★

Though Microsoft Art Gallery also focuses on a single great museum, London's National Gallery, it concentrates on the 2,000-plus works instead of the institution itself. Art Gallery is certainly comprehensive, but it lacks the depth and sophistication of Montparnasse Multimedia's Le Louvre.



Microsoft Art Gallery is a National Gallery Tour appropriate for students.

The title is organized into five parts: Artists' Lives, Historical Atlas, Picture Types, General Reference, and Guided Tours. You can easily move among the sections using the handy "See Also" button, which points to related content. From the Artists' Lives screen about Edouard Manet, for example, click on thumbnails of five paintings to see the works; jump to articles about Paris in the 1800s in the Historical Atlas; learn about Portraits and "Everyday Life" paintings in the Picture Types section; and explore the Picture Space and Pupil topics in the General Reference section.

Getting around is easy, but once you arrive you'll find only a short text description accompanying each image. And it's disappointing that you can't truly isolate and zoom in on a work: you can enlarge the image, but not quite to full-screen (it sits in a window with a title bar). Worst of all, the enlarged image overlaps the information screen. Art Gallery also provides precious little multimedia: You'll find audio narration and limited animations only in the four guided tours.

Art Gallery's boiled-down information and clean interface, however, make it suitable for junior-high or high-school students.

Postimpressionism lovers can indulge A Passion for Art.

A Passion for Art

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★★

A Passion for Art, *PC Entertainment*'s 1995 Editors' Choice award winner for best special-interest multimedia title (January 1996, page 36), is still hard to beat. Apart from its flawless interface and rich content, A Passion for Art opens up a world otherwise inaccessible to the general public. The private Barnes

Collection of paintings by Renoir, Cezanne, Matisse, and other postimpressionists is an impressive lot, and A Passion for Art does it justice with high-quality reproductions and expert commentary.

The disc presents more than 300 works in four areas: Tours, Gallery, Paintings, and Timeline. The narrated Tours—covering Dr. Barnes, the collection, female nudes, and dance—add depth to the title, as does its Archive section, which holds historical items such as Barnes' letters. But wandering the 3-D gallery is the best part; you feel as if you are actually strolling through the museum.

Mastery of Michelangelo is any eyeful—but proves hard to navigate.

Along with Le Louvre, A Passion for Art is a must-buy for art aficionados. If you can buy only one of these two excellent discs, let your artistic interests be the guide.

Mastery of Michelangelo

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★★★

Another place you may never have the opportunity to visit is the Vatican, home of Michelangelo's famous Sistine Chapel. E.M.M.E. Interactive's Mastery of Michelangelo takes you there, and brings the rest of the Renaissance artist's amazing oeuvre to disc, along with a look at his life and times.

The frustrating title breaks its subject matter into four parts: Biography by Places, Gallery, Last Judgment, and Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The Biography section presents maps with iconized jumping-off points, but it's not always clear what's going on. The first map you see, for example, covers various eras in Europe at large, Bologna, Florence, Carpese, and Rome, but offers no clue about which area will lead you to the great artist himself. Instinctively going to the earliest entry, Europe 1453–1497, doesn't yield a single mention of Michelangelo.

Modern Art's interface adopts the bold style of its subject matter.

The treatment of the art itself is adequate, especially the closeups of various works. You can view David, for example, in nine different ways. There's plenty of text information for the disc's 68 core images, but audio commentary covers only a handful.

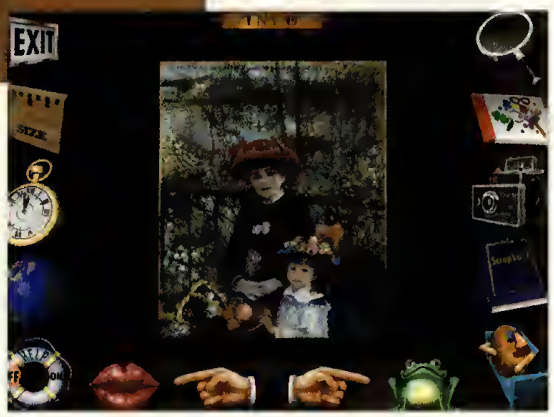
If you're intrigued by Michelangelo, this disc will give you plenty to ogle at. You just may have to spend some time looking for it.

Modern Art

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★★★1/2

CD-ROM museums are the digital equivalent of being there. In the case of Grolier's Modern Art, which showcases the Maeght Foundation, located in southern France, let's hope getting around the real thing is a bit easier. The result of Modern Art's attempt to match its bold subject matter with a minimalist, artistic interface is simply confusion.

The title embarks with an impressive video tour of the museum: A roving viewfinder in the screen's center shows the highlights of the Maeght Foundation's seven key areas—including artists, works, and the building's architecture—while thumbnails of the works appear around the perimeter. You can jump to these works or go back to them later when the tour's over. Problem is, the tour keeps restarting as you're trying to figure out how to get to the information and images.



Kids of all ages will enjoy With Open Eyes.

Modern Art's content is truly impressive, including audio commentary by Foundation co-founder Aime Maeght (in French with English subtitles). But you may give up trying to find it.

With Open Eyes

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★★

Voyager's With Open Eyes is ostensibly for kids, but it will appeal to art lovers of all ages. The disc surveys the world of art with 200 selections from the Art Institute of Chicago. This diverse collection of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and other works is packaged in a fun, easy-to-use interface that kids—and adults—will master in no time.

Colorful icons line the screen's perimeter: a clock for the timeline, a mouth for audio commentary, a game board for art-related challenges, a magnifying glass to zoom in for a closer look, etc. And no matter where you roam, a thumbnail of the last image remains visible, making it easy to return. Art programs for adults should be this engaging and easy to navigate. With Open Eyes is a great way to expose children to the world of fine art. They'll never think of museums as big, boring buildings again. ■

Also Showing

Ancient Egyptian Art

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★★

More a database than a multimedia title, DCI's Ancient Egyptian Art catalogs 100 works from the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The image quality is excellent, search capabilities robust, and information detailed. For serious art students—and those intrigued by artifacts—only.

The Art Historian

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★1/2

The Art Historian covers 600 works, from the early Renaissance through modern art, with side-trips to Asia, Africa, and Oceania. The title has an academic bent—complete with a test-yourself feature—that would be excusable if it weren't for more serious interface shortcomings.

The Frick Collection

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★★

Another DCI ImageBase title, this one features 240 works from New York's famed Frick collection. As with the Egyptian title, its images are high-quality reproductions and the accompanying information is in-depth, but it's for serious art lovers only.

Great Artists

Platform: Win CD

Rating: ★★1/2

Great Artists, developed in conjunction with the National Gallery, London, chronicles the lives of

40 notable painters, from Botticelli to Wright. Each life is broken down into a series of screens with explanatory text and thumbnail images. For each artist, a representative painting is given special treatment, including extensive audio commentary and the option of being examined in high-resolution, full-screen glory, even zooming in several layers. But the other 960 images on the disc are confined to thumbnails of varying degrees of blurriness. That's unforgivable in an art title.

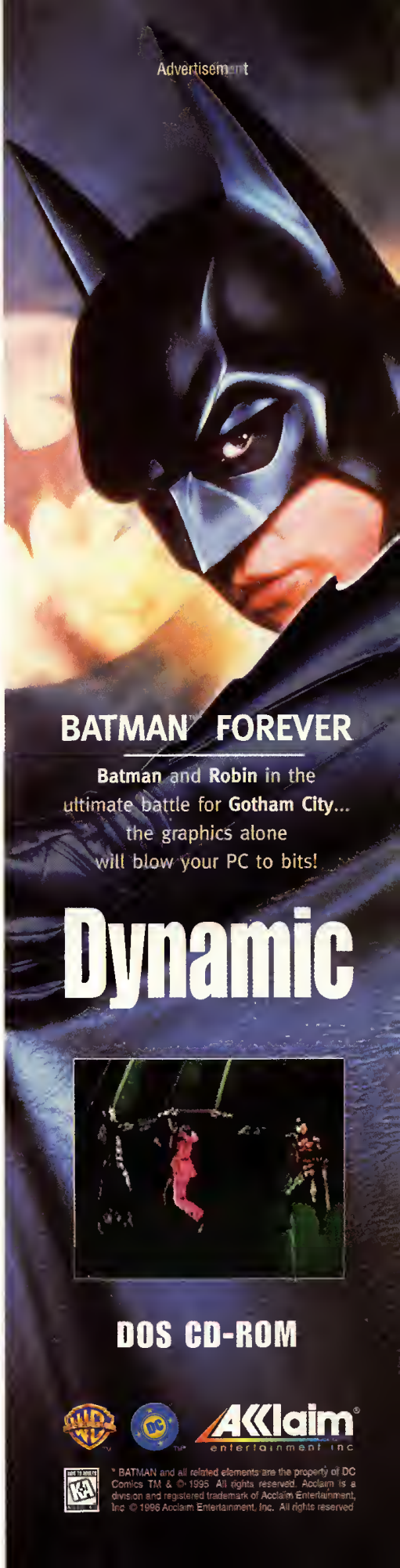
Matisse, Aragon, Prokofiev: An Interactive Adventure In Art

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★★

Equal parts art disc, music-appreciation class, and literary exploration, New Line New Media's An Interactive Adventure In Art profiles 19th-century painter Matisse, poet Aragon, and composer Prokofiev. Exploring the three artistic disciplines is pleasant, as you study Matisse and Aragon's works accompanied by Prokofiev's music, but it's not very cohesive. The title covers each artist's themes separately, and there's no real attempt to connect the three men to one another.

Advertisement



Monet, Verlaine, Debussy: The Impressionist Revolution

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★

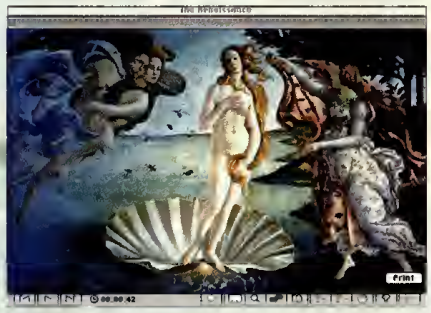
New Line New Media repeats the same disjointed treatment used in the Matisse-Aragon-Prokofiev disc. A pleasure to look at and listen to, but missing an overall perspective.

History Through Art

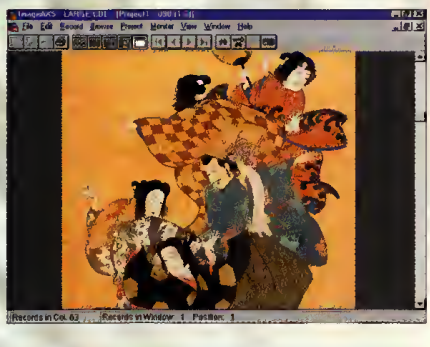
Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★

A ten-disc set that spans Ancient Greece through the 20th century, History Through Art is



organized around "presentations," which are essentially narrated slide shows. As the name suggests, there's more history than art.



Masterworks of Japanese Painting

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★★

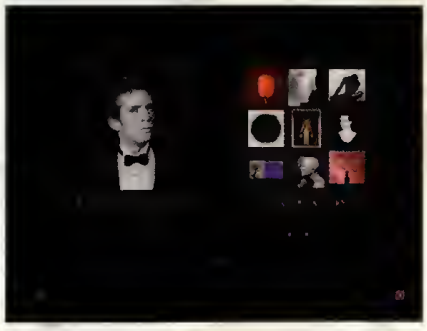
DCI's ImageBase of Edo art, featuring 350 works from the private collection of Etsuko and Joe D. Price, the largest outside of Japan.

Robert Mapplethorpe —An Overview

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★1/2

The highest-profile ImageBase from DCI, produced in conjunction with the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Don't expect to find anything controversial in this general overview of the late artist. (DCI addresses that in two



other titles about Mapplethorpe: The Controversy and Catalogue Raissoné.) Six video presentations—which are completely separate from the ImageBase—add context to the catalog of 400 works, missing from other DCI titles.

Starry Night

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★★★★

This unique Voyager disc investigates Van Gogh's—and 19th-century society's—interest in astronomy, and how it's reflected in his work. Along with a thorough study of the famous painting, you'll find some 250 other reproductions of the artist's work, plus his letters to his

brother. Starry Night feels a little like attending a lecture, but it's well worth paying attention to.

Exploring Modern Art

Platform: Win CD

Rating: ★★1/2

Get a taste of London's Tate Gallery with a look at 150 of its modern works. View thumbnails and full-screen, high-res reproductions in each gallery as you listen to brief audio commentary

on each work. To get more information, you must exit the Gallery and enter the Archive section. This disjointed approach makes searching Modern Art a chore.

The Museum Shop

Le Louvre; BMG Interactive; 212-930-6768; Win/Mac CD; $49.95

Microsoft Art Gallery; Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, Mac CD; $54.95

A Passion for Art; Corbis; 800-246-2065; Win/Mac CD; $40–$50

Mastery of Michelangelo; E.M.M.E. Interactive; 203-406-4040; Win CD, Mac CD; $59.95

Modern Art; Grolier Electronic Publishing; 800-285-4534; Win CD, Mac CD; $19.95

With Open Eyes; Voyager; 800-446-2001; Win/Mac CD; $39.95

Ancient Egyptian Art; DCI; 800-449-6220; Win/Mac CD; $79.95

The Art Historian; Big Hand; 800-987-4263; Win/Mac CD; price not available

The Frick Collection; DCI; 800-449-6220; Win/Mac CD; $79.95

Great Artists; Cambrix Publishing; 818-993-4274; Win CD; $59

Matisse, Aragon, Prokofiev: An Interactive Adventure in Art; New Line New Media; 310-854-5811; Win/Mac CD; $49.98

Monet, Verlaine, Debussy: The Impressionist Revolution; New Line New Media; 800-294-0022; Win/Mac CD; $49.98

History Through Art; Zane Interactive; Win/Mac CD; $39.95

Masterworks of Japanese Painting; DCI; 800-449-6220; Win/Mac CD; $79.95

Robert Mapplethorpe—An Overview; DCI; 800-449-6220; Win/Mac CD; $79.95

Starry Night; Voyager; 800-446-2001; Win/Mac CD; $39.95

Exploring Modern Art; Cambrix Publishing; 818-993-4274; Win CD; $49.95

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NBA Live 96

By Steve Klett

Watch your slams again and again with Instant Replay.

Choose your favorite playing perspective from a variety of camera angles.

Electronic Arts' sports lineup has done an admirable job of living up to the company's "If it's in the game, it's in the game" marketing pitch. NBA Live 96 is no exception.

The follow-up to last year's smash NBA Live 95 further entrenches EA as the five-on-five roundball king of the PC market. With virtually no competition yet on the court—Acclaim's NBA Jam is two-on-two, and GTE's NCAA Championship and Mindscape's NCAA Final Four are still in development—that may seem an easy title to hold. But EA hasn't been content to rest on its laurels.

Like NHL Hockey 96, NBA Live 96 uses a 3-D game engine that delivers a wide variety of panoramic camera views and stunning, high-resolution courts and backgrounds (though the players themselves still look pixelated). Add CD-quality audio effects, such as crowds that cheer the home team and razz the visitors, and Live 96 comes close to matching the feel of a televised NBA game.

And like its predecessor, Live 96 boasts all current NBA teams, including the expansion Vancouver Grizzlies and Toronto Raptors. Rosters are remarkably up-to-date: Alonzo Mourning, for example, plays for the Heat, not the Hornets.

As before, you can make trades at will, so swap your team's bench-warmers for NBA All-Stars to strengthen your roster. You also get all the stats you could want—from minutes played to three-pointers made—and the option to play full or abbreviated seasons or hop right into the playoffs.

Perhaps the coolest new feature Live 96 brings to the hardwood is the ability to create your own players. You pick everything from the player's name and skin color to his shooting abilities. Put yourself in the game, bring back Larry Bird and Magic Johnson, or better yet, create Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley, who aren't included due to their contracts with other game makers.

You can also play head-to-head against a friend using a keyboard/mouse and joystick combo. And the game supports the upcoming Advanced Gravis GrIP System (see review, page 80), which will let four players go at it, each with his own gamepad.

Now the bad stuff. The Live series still has a long way to go in terms of play balance. You get the three skill levels from Live 95: Rookie, Starter, and All-Star. The first two should be a cakewalk for anyone who's played EA's NBA series before, but the All-Star level will frustrate even the best computer hoopsters.

At this elite level, the (invisible) refs will whistle you for touch fouls, while the computer will take the head off your point guard on a drive to the hoop—no harm, no foul. When and if you do get to the line, free throws are nearly impossible to make, even with players who supposedly shoot 90 percent or better. As if this weren't bad enough, the computer cheats. Loose balls and rebounds become impossible to pick up—for your guys—at crucial moments. And if you do manage to build a lead, the computer may simply say "OK, you're not scoring again for the rest of the game," and proceed to trounce you.

Frustrating as this can be, NBA Live 96 is an improvement over its predecessor in nearly every way. It may not have you singing "I love this game," but it's by far the best basketball game in town.

Can you stop Shaq and the Magic from reaching the finals?

TIPS

- Don't be quick to leave your feet. The computer likes to pump fake twice before shooting.
- When your opponent employs the half-court-trap defense, control the point guard, hang back a bit, and look for the open cutter.
- That flashing red circle under your shooting guard means he's feeling hot, so feed him the rock until he proves otherwise.
- There's no such thing as illegal defense in this game. Keep your center under the hoop to block shots when the game gets tight.
- Baseline shots close to the basket have a nasty habit of simply going out of bounds. Avoid them.

NBA Live 96
EA Sports
800-245-4525

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8M8 RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Despite its unscrupulous artificial intelligence, NBA Live 96 shines.

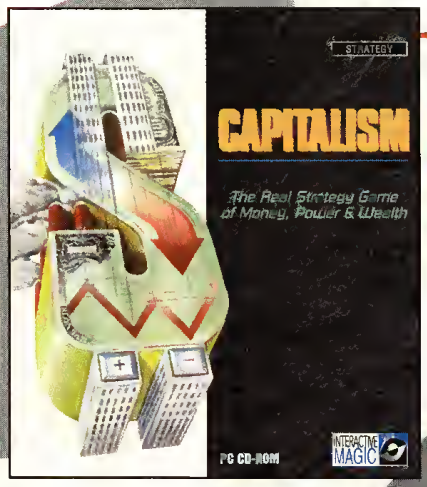
INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

"Absolutely a must-have!"
- Strategy Plus

BEST SIM OF THE YEAR!
- PC Gamer

Game of the Month
- PC Entertainment

"Star Rangers... will have you on the edge of your seat from start to finish."
- PC Gamer



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Top Gun: Fire At Will

By Steve Klett

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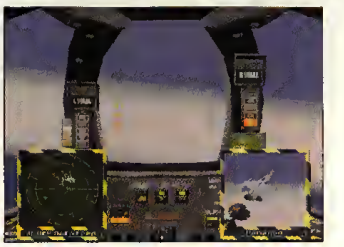

Cockpit windows show distant action.

Look, up in the sky—is it a flight sim, an action game, or an "interactive" movie? Why, it's all of the above: it's Spectrum HoloByte's Top Gun: Fire At Will.

Yes, this much ballyhooed F-14 Tomcat game based on Tom Cruise's mid-'80s box-office smash *Top Gun* has finally catapulted off the deck after a five-month delay. Was it worth the wait?

Well, if you were expecting something along the lines of Wing Commander III in a Navy Tomcat fighter, you'll probably be satisfied with what you get. If you're a flight sim buff and were looking for a more serious game, you'll be disappointed.

Fire At Will's storyline is based on the movie, with you stepping into the role of the overconfident Maverick (originally played by Cruise) behind the stick of a multimillion-dollar F-14 Tomcat.

After competing for the coveted Top Gun trophy in Miramar, you must help cool off several hotspots around the world, in locales ranging from Cuba to Korea. Over the course of 40 missions you'll have run-ins with a band of mercenary pilots flying Russian MiGs, which you'll eventually have to take out. (Up to 16 players can battle it out in Tomcats over a network, or you can play with or against a buddy via modem and serial cable.)

A cast of 20 actors appears in the game's hour of video, which is interspersed throughout the missions. Of the bunch, you'll recognize James Tolkan, who returns as Hondo—Maverick's over-the-top commanding officer in the movie—and Julie Carmen (*The Milagro Beanfield War*), who plays the role of enterprising reporter Amanda Moore. Though of middling quality and greatly overacted (hey, the acting wasn't so hot in the movie, either), the video fulfills its purpose of giving the game a movielike feel while advancing the plot.

In terms of game play, Fire At Will is probably as simple as you can get for a game based on the most sophisticated jet fighter in the world. For example, providing you have a Flightstick Pro or equivalent, you'll only need to go to the keyboard for a half-dozen commands (radar, chaff, flares, and such). You can also let the computer control your throttle setting or land the plane for you (though some missions require you to land yourself). This latter feature is handy, given that carrier "traps" are the toughest skill for a naval aviator to master.

In the air you'll be bombarded with a variety of pop-up windows that show everything from enemy and friendly missile launches to videos of radio intelligence officer Merlin and your wingmen. While incredibly unrealistic, these windows help keep the movie motif going, and they provide you with valuable game information, such as the type of missile locked on your tail and who launched it.

The problem is, the radio chatter and combat video don't always sync with the storyline. For example, several times my wingman got splashed, only to greet me with an earful of boasting when I returned to the carrier. The graphics are also a mixed bag, with excellent textured-mapped planes and ships but badly pixelated terrain.

Nevertheless, while it may not be quite up to the standards of its namesake, Fire At Will provides a thrilling ride for daring, would-be Tomcat drivers.

Top Gun: Fire At Will
Spectrum HoloByte
800-695-4263

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $55

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Fire At Will is an ideal choice for gamers who want to fly without taxing their brain. Hard-core flight buffs should steer clear, though.

TIPS

- **Having trouble with a mission? Backing out to the setup screen and selecting unlimited weapons should do the trick.**
- **Resist the impulse to fire as soon as an enemy plane comes within range of your missiles. Your kill rate—and your survival rate—will climb dramatically if you hold off for a minute or two.**
- **If you can, save your Sidewinder (AIM-9M) missiles until you're behind the enemy.**
- **Wait for enemy missiles to close to within two or three miles before beginning evasive maneuvers.**

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PLAY the Demo on the disc

Rayman

Tired of the blood and mayhem in most action titles? Ubi Soft offers the perfect solution in the playful world of Rayman, an addictive new PC version of the company's popular Amiga side-scrolling platform game.

Come prepared: Your journey won't be a short one. As Rayman, you're on a quest to recover the pieces of the Great Protoon and restore peace to your realm. The story itself isn't particularly original or exciting, but that hardly describes what you'll encounter along the way.

It's one mad dash through Picture City.

Rayman
Ubi Soft Entertainment
800-824-7638

Platform: DOS/Win 95
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

As you search for Protoon pieces in more than 60 levels in 6 different worlds, you'll discover beautifully animated terrain loaded with obstacles and enemies. You'll need to watch your step in Bongo Hill, where enormous, slippery music bars serve as platforms and watchful instruments become your foes. Trudging through the Swamp of Forgetfulness, you'll scamper up flowers, vines, and grassy hills to stay ahead of the rising water. Each world is full of details, so you'll want to retrace your steps to see even more as Betilla the Fairy gives you the power to punch, grab, fly, and more.

Graphicswise, the game shines. Sharp, colorful enemies and environments make Rayman's 2-D scenes incredibly involving—at times, almost hallucinatory. Rayman doesn't just look like a cartoon, it *feels* like one. Turn up the clever sound effects and the strangely soothing soundtrack, and you're part of an animation extravaganza.

If you appreciate fun, imaginative titles with great game play, you'll thoroughly enjoy Rayman. —*Corey Cohen*

Cyberspeed

It seems a game company just can't feel good about itself anymore unless it has a futuristic racing game in its lineup. However, in their mad rush to get in the race, some companies have forgotten to make it fun. At least, that's what seems to have happened to Mindscape's Cyberspeed.

The game looks and sounds great, with a slick interface, high-resolution graphics, and cool tunes. Yet, all of Cyberspeed's glitz appears to be little more than a vain attempt to hide the fact that it has virtually no game play.

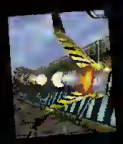
You choose from a pool of eight supersonic racing vehicles, each with its own pilot, country of origin, and distinct set of strengths and weaknesses. Some are faster, others are tougher, and so on. You then enter a ten-race tournament in which you need to place in the top three pole positions to advance. You get the usual missile, energy gun, and speed boost powerups.

Great graphics can't make up for poor play mechanics.

Doesn't sound so bad, does it?

Well, maybe that's because I have yet to mention the fact that your ship is attached to an energy beam that guides it down the center of the track. You don't get to control the full movement of the ship! Rail systems like this work fine for shooters such as The Hive, but fail miserably in a racing game. Cyberspeed basically lets you use your thrust and fire weapons, perform right and left loops, and occasionally switch tracks. Yawn.

Cyberspeed
Mindscape
800-234-3088



Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX4/100, 8MB RAM, Windows 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: $45

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

Oh, but you do get some high-quality cinematic commercial spoofs between races. It's too bad Mindscape didn't devote that effort to Cyberspeed's game play, rather than useless fluff.

Fail to place in a race and an annoying announcer yells, "Maybe this Rookie should try another race." Well, this rookie *will* be trying another game—like Sony's WipeOut or Bullfrog's Hi-Octane. —*Steve Klett*

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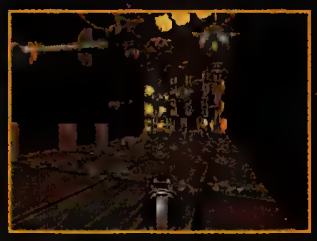

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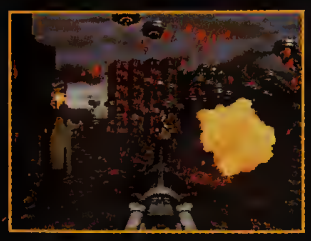
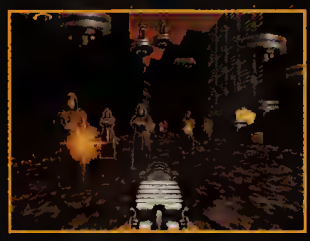


"This is the most multiplayer-friendly game we've seen." —*Computer Game Review*



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Virtual Karts

A line exists in the world of racing games, with simulations on one side and arcade games on the other. At times, for some bizarre reason, the two sides come together and give birth to a hybrid offspring that tries to be both—but usually fails to be much of either.

Unfortunately, MicroProse's Virtual Karts suffers from just such an identity crisis.

Despite box claims to the contrary, you won't find much simulation in Virtual Karts.

Virtual Karts
MicroProse
8DD-879-7529

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-RDM drive
Street Price: $45

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

At first, Virtual Karts appears to have all the makings of a grand sim in the tradition of Papyrus' IndyCar and NASCAR Racing. The tracks are based on real kart courses in Baltimore, New York, and San Francisco. You can customize your vehicle extensively, choosing such things as chassis, color, tire type, and even the number of gear teeth in your transmission. You can also compete in single races or a championship season, just like in those other best-selling racing simulations.

When you start to play, however, you'll find Virtual Karts is about as realistic a racing sim as Pole Position. For starters, the engine noise doesn't sound like a two-stroke Yamaha. Worse, the karts don't perform realistically. MicroProse says "simulation" on the box, but when was the last time you could hit a sidewalk or another racer going more than 80 mph and just bounce off of them?

Virtual Karts may be tolerable for kart-racing fans who want something a little more true-to-life than, say, GT Interactive's Super Karts. But everyone else can pass it by. —*Shane Mooney*

GameBreak! Timon & Pumbaa's Jungle Games

Make a hit movie, then milk it with a bunch of follow-up CD-ROM titles. That's the approach Disney seems to be taking with its *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, and *Pocahontas* edutainment titles (see review on page 98), and now with the broad-based arcade collection GameBreak! Timon & Pumbaa's Jungle Games.

The package, co-developed by 7th Level and Disney Interactive Entertainment, features five simple arcade games: pinball, shooting gallery, a Space Invaders ripoff, a variation of Tetris, and an updated Frogger. These basic games are dressed up with a general jungle theme and characters from *The Lion King*—including your wise-cracking, leisure-loving hosts, Timon and Pumbaa. In the Space Invaders–like Burper, for example, you move Pumbaa across the bottom of the screen and fire burps at falling bugs and other objects. Burper works best with a joystick, while Jungle Pinball (our favorite), Hippo Hop, and Bug Drop are easiest with a keyboard. Slingshooter can only be played with a mouse.

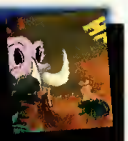
GameBreak delivers top-notch graphics and five amusing challenges.

For the most part, the games in GameBreak are an amusing and satisfying lot. Though you won't find anything new in terms of play, the graphics here are truly groundbreaking. The introduction sequences and even many of the play screens will have you convinced you're watching the Disney animated movie. On the other hand, original character voices—reciting the same lines again and again—will have you laughing at first, then wincing after the first ten minutes. It's doubtful you'll want to hear the phrase "hakuna matata" ever again.

Disney pegs GameBreak for ages 8 and up, and it's sure to be a hit with the younger crowd thanks to its juvenile humor and popular theme. Grown-ups looking for quick and mindless challenges will also have a good time with the title: the graphics alone are enough to make you smile.

—*Christine Grech*

GameBreak! Timon & Pumbaa's Jungle Games



Disney Interactive Entertainment
8DD-228-0988

Developer: 7th Level/Disney Interactive Entertainment
Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/33, 8M8 RAM, DOS 6.D, Windows, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $35–$40

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

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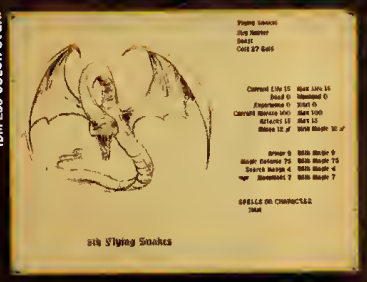

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Havoc

Battlezone is reborn as Havoc.

Play Havoc, and let slip the dogs of corporate war.

This Windows 95/Mac hybrid from Reality Bytes finds mega-corporations battling it out in a texture-mapped update of the arcade classic Battlezone. You tool about an enclosed arena in speedy 3-D, blowing up everything in sight—aircraft, hangars, gun towers, other players—in search of three gate keys. Survive to reach the gate, and it's welcome to the next level.

But don't rush too much. After all, you never know what you might find after the dust clears. Maybe a boost for your always-depleted shields. Maybe a better laser or extra rockets. Or maybe a nasty new weapon. (You can also pick these up on bonus levels by finding the letters to spell out "Havoc.") Trust me, you'll need 'em for the end-of-world bosses.

Unlike Battlezone, this landscape's not flat or colorless. In the Badlands, the first of three worlds, you can send your craft—tank, cycle, or hovercraft—soaring off angled slopes, looping up and down canyon walls skateboard-style, and (if you find a way to the top) dropping off the cliffs. (Well, you're not supposed to drop off them, clumsy, but it's neat that you can.)

Controls are almost Doom-like in their simplicity, and speed's not a problem. On a 66MHz Power Mac, with the game at full detail and the screen at full size, your craft should whisk along nicely. Thanks go to QuickDraw 3D on the Mac and DirectDraw under Windows 95.

However, the computer enemies aren't exactly Einsteins. Several times, I caught them with their pants down, trying to climb unclimably steep walls. Such oversights eventually make the single-player action tedious.

Happily, the game comes with a pair of hybrid CD-ROMs. Give the second one to a friend and you can link up via modem (and, with the purchase of additional discs, with up to 15 opponents over a network). Then watch Havoc really break loose.

—Peter Olafson

Havoc
Reality Bytes
617-621-2500

Platform: Win 95/Mac CD
Requires: Win 95: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Windows 95, 256-color VGA; Mac: 68040/33, 8MB RAM, System 7.0, 256-color display
List Price: $39

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Tempest 2000

Spikes. Pulsars. Zooming to the next level....It's all coming back now, isn't it? Tempest, the addictive early-'80s arcade shooter, makes the leap to the PC as Tempest 2000, the first release of Atari's assault on the desktop (though the game shipped last year for the Jaguar game system). If you can convince yourself that using a joystick to play makes the grade, you'll find the translation is pretty good.

That's a big if. The original Tempest featured a weighted dial to control the movement of your Blaster ship, which rides the perimeter of a variety of different-shaped "webs" while firing at enemies. The dial made wrist action and finesse critical to the Tempest experience, and there's no way to reproduce that here. Instead, you can play with a keyboard (don't bother) or joystick. The latter takes some practice, and doesn't approach the handling of the dial, but it's an acceptable substitute. Likewise, the graphics are reasonable, but not as good as the arcade version's.

Tempest 2000 transitions nicely to the PC.

The game itself fares better: Most of the core strategies shift nicely to the PC version. The basic enemies (Flippers, Spikers, Fuseballs, and Pulsars) behave identically, and picking them off is easy, even if you've never played before. Limit your movement and fire continuously to complete many of the early levels in Tempest Plus (the classic version of the game). But sitting still isn't wise once the electrified Fuseballs and Pulsars start showing up.

Even better, the new levels in Tempest 2000, which differs from the original game, add some fun capabilities. You can have an "AI droid" sidekick who shoots at your enemies. Atari also added powerups that enable, among other things, jumping ability and the use of particle lasers that are more effective than your standard shooter. New, funkier enemies abound, too, such as shot-reflecting Mirrors and UFOs that maneuver off the web while firing at you. You can even engage a friend playing Tempest Duel over a null modem.

—Donald St. John

Tempest 2000
Atari
408-745-2000

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386DX/40, 2MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, VGA
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

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Arcade America

7th Level delivers good graphics, no doubt about it. But, as with Battle Beast, the company's first arcade action title, Arcade America shows that 7th Level still has a lot to learn about making a fun game.

In Arcade America, you play Joey, a pear-shaped, beanie-wearing punk whose pet monsters have been blasted across the country due to an overly intense early-morning wake-up call. Now it's up to him to recover the critters before they do any serious damage.

Arcade America takes the Donkey Kong genre to new highs—and lows.

Arcade America
7th Level
800-884-8863

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $39.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

So Joey hits the road to track down the missing monsters at ten U.S. cities and attractions, including Alcatraz, the Las Vegas strip, and the Grand Canyon. On the way to each destination, he maneuvers his car to avoid obstacles such as trees and rabbits while picking up ammo and extra lives.

Upon arriving at each monster's hiding place, Joey gets to traverse a variety of platform- and maze-style arcade games, jumping from platform to platform while belly-bopping or avoiding deadly critters. He must also pick up junk food to give him the energy to keep going, and collect various "souvenirs" needed to lure the monsters home.

It all looks great. 7th Level once again offers Saturday-morning-cartoon-quality graphics that surpass just about everything on the market. Comedian Bobcat Goldthwait provides Joey's voice, as well as various bodily noises that punctuate the other top-quality sound effects and voices.

Despite the high production values, though, the game quickly becomes boring. You can blame too many levels of too-similar play leavened only by occasional attempts at scatological humor. It's Donkey Kong meets Disney with an adolescent attitude, but the world really doesn't need another Donkey Kong.

—Christopher Lindquist

Venom/Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety

Millions know Spider-Man and Venom as two of comics' most popular, compelling characters. With their endless battles and occasional team-ups, the hero/anti-hero duo has slugged, quipped, and crawled its way to the forefront of magazine and toy racks alike.

It's a shame, then, that the first PC game based on their adventures belongs at the back of the shelf.

The premise of Acclaim's Separation Anxiety, based on an actual Marvel Comics storyline, is interesting enough. Venom, a human/alien hybrid with the superpowers of Spider-Man, has discovered the Life Foundation's plans to use his much-hated offspring to wipe out humanity. As either Spider-Man or Venom—or both, if you play with a friend—your job is to destroy the symbiont children and take down the ruthless corporation, one minion at a time.

Even cameos by Marvel's finest can't save Separation.

As you run through the sparsely detailed streets, sewers, and shopping malls of New York, you'll punch, kick, and web various enemies. Luckily, you're not alone. Along the way, you'll pick up icons that let you call on Captain America, Daredevil, and other Marvel superheroes for assistance when the going gets tough.

Venom/ Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety
Acclaim Entertainment
516-656-5000

Platform: Win 95
Requires: 486DX/33, 4MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

You'll need the help, but not where you'd think. Unlike many sidescrolling fighting games, the bosses who end most of Separation's 13 levels don't really pose much of a challenge. The game's difficulty lies in attacks from the never-ending hordes of soldiers, robots, and hoodlums. The farther you get, the faster they attack. Simple—and, after a while, boring.

The uninspired soundtrack and standard sound effects don't help. Acclaim didn't even take advantage of Spidey's trademark humor, or Venom's penchant for ultraviolence. Only Spider-Man or sidescroller fanatics should feel any anxiety over skipping this one.

—Corey Cohen

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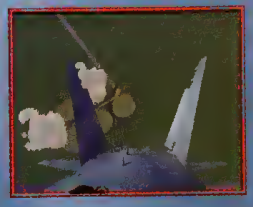

Island Peril

Island Peril ain't Doom, but it ain't bad.

As if the first-person-perspective-shooter genre wasn't crowded enough, here's another entry trying to carry Doom to new heights.

Atlantean's Island Peril delivers its own brand of campy humor through extensive use of live-action video. As Dick Danger, D.A., you've got to save Samantha Smith, a bikini-clad former girlfriend, from the clutches of a criminal who's still mad at you for putting him behind bars. The acting is pretty lame (Atlantean is a unit of a large adult-video producer and distributor), but it adds at least a semblance of a plot.

Island Peril
Atlantean Interactive Games
800-822-8339

Developer: electric fantasies
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66 or higher, 8M8 RAM, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $39

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

More importantly, Island Peril offers some pretty decent game play. The backgrounds are reasonably crisp and the enemies are digitized characters taken from live video. They don't look half bad, especially compared to some of the pixelated bad guys wandering around many well-known Doom-style games. The use of video does, however, limit them to somewhat human form.

In keeping with the island theme, you must contend with baddies ranging from gun-toting dweebs to tough body-builders to powerful Underworld Devils and Voodoo Gods. In addition to the standard pistols, shotguns, and bazookas, you'll also find water rifles—useful to quench fireballs—and Lube Tubes that make the ground too slick for your enemies to chase you. (Cheat ahead! If the game's still too tough for you, type PLUSH for a full complement of health, armor, weapons, ammo, cash, and keys.)

Atlantean has also embraced the online and add-on markets. To supplement the game disc's 17 levels, the company plans to post a new level each month on its World Wide Web site at **http://www.atlantean.com/**.

Sure, Island Peril won't strike fear into the hearts of Doom maker id Software. But if you want a bit of funny business along with your shoot-'em-ups, you can get it here. *—Fredric Paul*

WarHawk

Sony's done a pretty good job of converting its PlayStation games, like Destruction Derby, to the PC. Unfortunately, things fall a little flat with the computer version of WarHawk. This futuristic flying shooter brings over all the action of the PlayStation original, but the graphics don't quite measure up.

WarHawk looks good but runs slow in hi-res mode.

The gist of the game? You zoom around in a high-tech fighter destroying wave after wave of enemy ships and structures while trying to avoid being blown from the sky. (If the action gets too tough, you can always fly at the "Granny" level. Wimp.)

Oh sure, it's plenty fun to fly around blasting away at hordes of enemy attackers on land, sea, and air. But you'll need more horsepower than my 16MB, 120MHz Pentium was able to deliver if you want adequate performance at the high-res modes. The action gets smoother and hotter in low-res, but some of the excitement fades along with the graphical detail.

It gets worse. Without the PlayStation's eight-button gamepad, you are forced to play either with the keyboard alone or a keyboard and mouse/joystick combination. None of the solutions works nearly as well as having access to all the options on a single controller. (Just about the only way to solve the problem is with Advanced Gravis' new GrIP system; see review on page 80.) Megamission flight-sim freaks used to deep, rich computer titles may also find the game a bit short.

If you cruised through Terminal Velocity and just need a quick fix of airborne excitement. WarHawk may give it to you. Otherwise, you'll probably want to skip this bird.

—Christopher Lindquist

WarHawk
Sony Interactive
800-438-7794

Developer: SingleTrack
Platform: DOS CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 60MHz Pentium, 8M8 RAM, Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: not available

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

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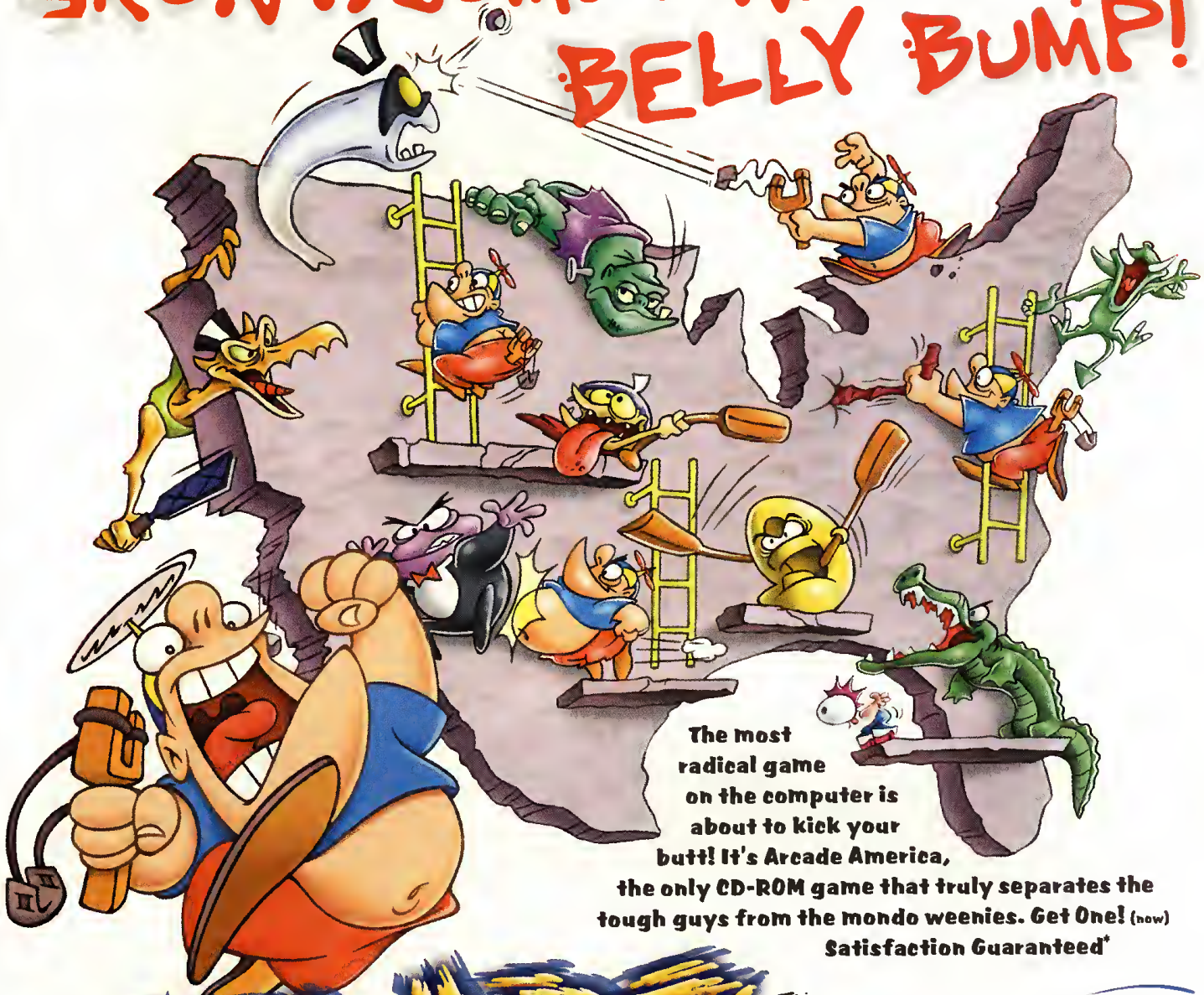

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Marathon 2: Durandal

Enhanced graphics are one of the first things you'll notice in this excellent sequel.

Well, that's another three months of my spare time spoken for: Marathon 2: Durandal is every bit the worthy successor to Bungie Software's original Mac Doomer.

Marathon 2 is set 17 years after your defense of the colony ship Marathon. Durandal, the rogue artificial intelligence in the original game, has gotten it back together and taken the battle to the Pfhor. Luckily, this 3-D, first-person blaster doesn't simply rest on its laurels. While a sequel can never recover an original's exhilarating sense of discovery, this is a better, more seasoned game on virtually every front.

Marathon 2: Durandal
Bungie Software
800-295-0060

Platform: Mac CD
Requires: 68040, 4MB RAM, System 7, 13-inch 256-color display
List Price: $49.99

GAME PLAY:	★★★★★
GETTING STARTED:	★★★★
GRAPHICS:	★★★★★
SOUND CHECK:	★★★★
VALUE:	★★★★★

The artists seem to have been unburdened by the new planetside setting, and the graphics—while serviceable in Marathon—are positively incandescent in Marathon 2. Levels are less dense and more artful in construction. (Sometimes it's not a question of where the monsters are, but where they aren't.) Watch your air gauge carefully: you'll often need to go scuba diving to make it through a mission.

This time, you are not alone in fighting the good fight, either. Durandal has been thawing out, arming, and beaming down the panicky colonists who inhabited the Marathon. Unfortunately, the "Bobs" still get in the way, and they don't cotton to being shot, though you won't be able to help it sometimes. Just don't make a habit of it, or eventually, they'll shoot back.

With all these enhancements, there's just one drawback: they appear to have taken their toll in system requirements. When the number of onscreen aliens and allies multiplies, the animations and sound sometimes break up on a 66MHz Power Mac.

Otherwise, this is very much the blend of pistol and puzzle that Mac gamers grew to love: the same infuriating placement of game-saving devices; the same clattering firefights with way too many aliens; the same dribs and drabs of story leaked by Durandal through video terminals.

Do you need a better excuse to open fire?—*Peter Olafson*

Zone Warrior

Here's a 3-D action game for Power Macs that—surprise—has absolutely nothing to do with Doom.

Zone Warrior is essentially Asteroids 3D with new bells and whistles. You're charged with the defense of a wheel-shaped space station in orbit over an obscure mining planet. That means piloting a wedgelike craft and using your mouse or keyboard to blow up projectiles launched by aliens.

Hit them (with a nice detonation animation resulting) before they hit the station, and a triangular zone outside the docking bay will be highlighted with vectors. Guide your craft into this zone and a tractor beam will draw it inside, where you'll be rated on both combat performance and the quality of your landing. (Neatness apparently counts on space stations.)

Missile Command goes 3-D in Zone Raiders.

If the station takes damage—each hit destroys a segment of the wheel's rim—you'll have to find and collide with a buoy that aligns you with the docking port. And if you mistake the buoys for projectiles and blow them up, well, you're on your own.

Zone Warrior
Casady & Green
800-359-4920

Platform: Power Mac
Requires: Power Mac, 1MB RAM, System 7.1, 256-color display
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★★★
GETTING STARTED:	★★★★
GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND CHECK:	★★★
VALUE:	★★★

Naturally, the projectiles become increasingly plentiful, and are augmented with much more aggressive attackers—the ultimate being the enemy command ship, whose appearance bodes utter destruction of the station unless you can intercede. Of course, this giant ship has a weakness in the back, but you'll have to be a speedy and accurate pilot to exploit it.

That's all there is to it. Zone Warrior doesn't commit the sin of overambition. The game is nicely put together, with efficient controls, smooth movement on Power Macs running at 66MHz and up, and clean, attractive texture-mapping of the combatants and station. The only limitations are those inherent in the form; it's just an arcade game, after all. But those limits, I'm happy to say, will probably never occur to you. —*Peter Olafson*

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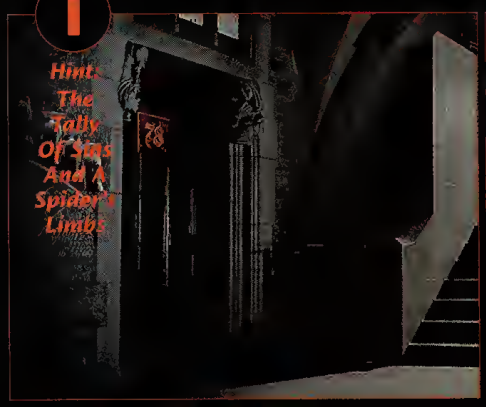

Hint: The Tally Of Sins And A Spider's Limbs

2

Hint: The Surface Aquarian And A Weapon Sagittarian

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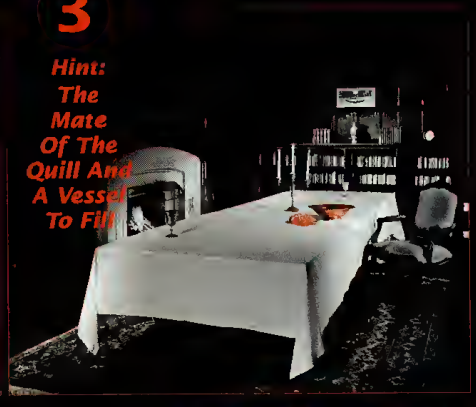

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Win CD • Win 95 CD

Fox Hunt

By Bill Meyer

Jack Fremont bumbles his way into a bit of international espionage.

Fox Hunt is supposed to be funny. Unfortunately, it's not a real side-splitter. Fox Hunt is supposed to have good game play. However, the action is a bit frustrating and unoriginal. What *does* Fox Hunt have? A cameo by Rob Lowe. Too bad that's not enough to justify the price of admission.

Capcom's latest full-motion-video action/adventure does have a few redeeming qualities. The game's video techniques, which allow you to manipulate the video in action game sequences, are innovative, if not revolutionary. The footage is fun to watch—especially the skiing shots. The music (from Rhino artists such as The Violent Femmes) is cool. Andrew Bowen, who plays slacker Jack Fremont, is funny—if you like Jim Carrey clones. The game's premise is also somewhat original.

Rob Lowe makes an appearance as a psychotic infomercial host.

Alan and Alan like to beat on you.

The story goes like this: At the height of the Cold War, a Soviet agent code-named The Fox attempted to destroy American culture with a slew of moronic sitcoms. In return, he gained access to the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, from which he took several warheads. Unfortunately, his plan backfired. U.S. patriots loved the shows, and soon even the Motherland's own citizens craved the low-brow entertainment. Hence, the Soviet Union crumbled due to bad TV programs, not reckless defense spending. You play a U.S. agent who must find The Fox and his disc full of warhead launch codes before the Soviets can. Before you know it, both sides are gunning for you.

It sounds fine, but here's where the trouble begins. The story gets lost in a rush to showcase Bondian locales and gadgets—casinos, jet-powered skis, and the like—and slapstick humor such as breaking wind. As a result, the game appears somewhat random and illogical. For instance, you don't do any investigating or puzzle-solving. Instead, the game gets moved along through various random attempts on your life by goofball hitmen like the pathetic Frank, played by Timothy Bottoms, and two mildly humorous CIA jokers.

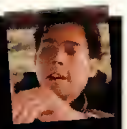
You won't find many episodes of actual game play. You track The Fox with a DNA helmet, navigate a hall maze in a Los Angeles hospital, zoom down a ski slope and shoot some snowboarders, skydive while targeting Rob Lowe clones, monkey around a casino, and finally, brawl with CIA agents and Russian henchmen. The hospital maze, slalom course, and final hand-to-hand combat will take some practice, but you should blaze through the rest with ease. And despite the fancy video work, the action itself proves generic and uninspired. Finally, the sound quality is particularly poor in some segments.

With more attention to the story and some logical, well-designed challenges, Fox Hunt might have been an interesting action/adventure. As it stands, the game disappoints, with limited, clichéd game play and an underdeveloped plot.

TIPS

• Search around your apartment a bit. You'll find some important items. And remember, you're a couch potato, so look in your chair. • When eluding Frank in your apartment, go out the same window the previous intruder exited. • In the hospital maze on the third and second floor, go straight through the first intersection on both floors. This is the quickest way to the elevator. • To successfully ski through the slalom gates at Aspen, turn right as you are about to pass them. • In the casino dressing room, grab the feather and go up the ladder to the casino floor. Once there, use it on the chip dispenser at the blackjack table. • When brawling Alan and Alan, use your fists. When fighting the Russian dudes, use your feet.

Fox Hunt
Capcom
408-774-0400



Platform: Win CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, Windows 3.1 or 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $64.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

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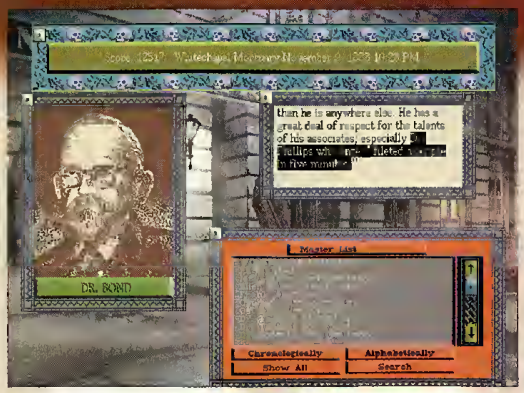
Jack the Ripper

From the fictional Sweeney Todd to the infamous Boston Strangler, society has long held a morbid fascination with serial murderers. Now GameTek's Jack the Ripper invites you to go back in time to the haunts of history's most celebrated killer to try and solve a mystery that has stumped experts for more than a century.



Interviews yield interesting information.

Amid the seedy Whitechapel and Spitalfields boroughs of Victorian London, you'll follow the killer's path through murder after murder, depicted in dark pen-and-ink and hand-colored drawings. (Don't confuse this game with the ultraviolent, live-video Ripper, on the way from Take-2 Interactive.) To catch Jack, you must search for clues at the murder site and interrogate witnesses and police personnel. You'll then use the collected information to arrive at the criminal's identity.

Of course, Jack was a wily guy, and catching him won't come easy. Many of the clues you'll find will prove vital, while other items are useless. And it takes time to interrogate witnesses and search the areas. Choose your actions carefully—but quickly. Wait too long, and crucial witnesses may leave the scene before you have a chance to question them.

Don't expect complete historical accuracy, either. Since the actual murders were never solved, the game developers added some clues to help implicate certain suspects. As a result, the ending can change from game to game depending on which secrets are revealed.

Despite its rather low-tech appearance (and almost complete lack of sound effects), the constant hunt for clues and witnesses can be quite absorbing. And the grisly nature of Jack's fiendish acts will be sobering.

Still, it's only a game, and no matter how many times you solve the mystery, Jack the Ripper will leave you wondering who the killer really was.

—Joy J. Ma

Jack the Ripper
GameTek
800-426-3835

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 4MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card, mouse
Street Price: $25

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

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ADVENTURE

The Raven Project

By Shane Mooney

The Raven Project's game play screens look as good as the introductory sequences.

I play games for a living. Before you get all green with envy, remember that most games never live up to their months (and sometimes years) of advance promotion. But every once in a while, you load up one that you haven't even heard of, and several hours into the morning, you come to the conclusion that you can't judge a game by its hype—or lack thereof.

Meet thy enemy, the ruthless Armids.

The Raven Project is just that sort of pleasant surprise.

As always seems to be the case in the 23rd Century, life sucks big time. An alien race of horny-faced humanoids called the Armids has taken over Earth and subjugated humankind. As always, however, a small band of rebel freedom fighters is fighting back—by seizing control of The Raven, the ultimate deep-space battle fortress.

You, Ax Man, prepare to take on those horny-faced Armids in your Lancer.

Fly through the Golden Gate Bridge on your mission through San Francisco's famous sites.

As a rebel, you hold the fate of the world in your hands. You must operate five different vehicles in three different types of combat—ship-to-ship, mechanized warrior battle, and surface-skimming planetary excursions—to carry out the rebel command's various missions. As you progress through the game, you eventually end up on The Raven itself, where your missions take you to the Moon and beyond.

Unlike many games with killer animation limited to the intro and cut sequences, The Raven Project features brilliant, cinematic-quality graphics during actual game play. The first surface-skimming mission sends you flying through the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown and the island of Alcatraz looking for Armid armaments. This isn't really a flight sim, so you don't have complete control of the ship. Instead, you can decide which way to go at certain junctures, all the while shooting at diving enemy fighters.

But that's not all. I almost wrote off this game when I saw that it featured battle-robot missions. I figured that after MechWarrior 2, what's the point? Then I took on a mission, and believe it or not, Mech 2 has little on this game. Oh, you don't have nearly the number of options, but this is by far the best-looking Mech sim since Mech 2 itself.

The space-combat mode puts you at the controls of one of two craft as you battle the Armids in orbit around the Earth. Just don't go looking for another TIE Fighter here. The action is simpler and less graphically interesting, but once again this no-name game puts in a classy and enjoyable effort.

The Raven Project does have some faults. Mindscape decided to go with full-motion-video sequences to propel the plot, and most of the time, they just don't work. The mediocre acting adds nothing to the game play and diminishes the overall experience with its cheesy, B-movie feel.

While The Raven Project may not have been on everyone's "Must Buy" list, players should certainly check out this sleeper.

The Raven Project
Mindscape
800-234-3088

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8M8 RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $45

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

A surprisingly good blend of smooth, high-resolution graphics and entertaining game play.

TIPS

- **Don't just dive into the first mission; read the instruction manual to better familiarize yourself with what you're supposed to do.**
- **Remember, you can't lock onto a target unless your crosshairs have actually crossed the object you want to shoot.**
- **In land-based missions, use the terrain to your advantage by dipping below hills or gliding safely to your targets in a protected valley.**
- **In surface-skimming missions, pay special attention to the briefings. They show pictures of the places you need to look out for in your "treasure" hunting.**

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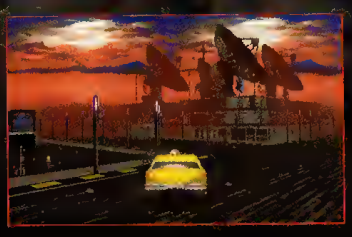

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ADVENTURE

Angel Devoid

By Peter Olafson

Your cute little assistant looks vexed.

Ride the subway, but don't grease its wheels.

Mindscape's Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy represents both the teasing promise and the profound limitations of CD-ROM adventure games equipped with full-motion video. It's a luxury game with a compact soul. Burnished fun for as long as it lasts, but it doesn't last long.

Master criminal Angel Devoid has played the ultimate joke on the stricken police detective who crashed while pursuing him: The detective has been brought back with Angel's face and the world on his back. As Jake Hard, you must escape from your hospital room, penetrate three sections of Neo City, confront Angel, and get to the bottom of whatever nastiness he has assembled.

You scroll smoothly through this rendered, four-disc city in pre-scripted steps using onscreen directional arrows. Along the way, you'll run across bars, a casino, a petite subway, shoot-outs with bad guys, and monologues from video characters.

You don't talk, but the game lets you adopt three attitudes in text conversations—from demonic to angelic—that can lead to distinctly different results. (Typically, you either die or receive some important item.)

This one likes to play games with grenades.

The documentation confusingly mingles story and instruction, but you probably won't need the manuals once you locate the arrows that scroll through the inventory at the bottom of the screen. The game is largely intuitive, and your pixie-ish Personal Digital Assistant issues backgrounders, advice, profiles of each character, and detailed descriptions of many objects.

The video performances, while often over-the-top in the fashion of most computer-game acting, are never totally awful. Some actors even have their moments. For example, the finale, with the real Angel's eyes peering out of a haunted face, is genuinely chilling.

Unfortunately, you'll arrive at the finale all too quickly. This is one of the shortest CD-ROM adventures I've ever played. The challenges are basic, and the game ultimately becomes little more than an elegant storytelling mechanism. The few real puzzles are simple—the toughest involves pushing three buttons in the right sequence in less than five seconds—and combat is a quick-draw devoid of strategy.

I knocked off the game in a single Saturday of sporadic play. And it wouldn't have even taken that long if Angel didn't take so long to load—even on a 133MHz Pentium with a 6X CD-ROM drive—and require you to perform such positional gymnastics to reach certain locations.

To its credit, Angel Devoid does sprinkle on a number of red herrings, death traps, and nonessential locations to provide texture and mood. And it does offer three possible endings. Unfortunately, which one you get doesn't depend on the path you take, but on your response to the game's final opportunity for interaction. And that lack of "history" removes much of the optional endings' appeal.

But is it fun? Actually, yes. That's the shame of it. For as long as it lasts, Angel Devoid is a pleasant, if basic, adventure. But then it's over—far too soon—and you're not even left with memories.

TIPS

• Note the number scrawled on the wall of the men's room in the bar near your starting point. It's vital. • Adopt the bad-guy persona for your little chat with the proprietor of that bar: You need to put the fear of God in her. (But keep your gun highlighted. She's got one of her own under the bar.) • Don't bother going for the heavy-duty ordinance on the subway tracks. You can't get it, and will die trying. • When trying to escape from prison or steal the cycle, watch for the forward arrow and click quickly when it appears. • In the art gallery elevator, try plugging in the floor numbers 666 and 911 for a pleasant (and extended) surprise.

Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy

Mindscape
800-234-3088

Platform: DOS/Mac CD
Requires: DOS: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.D, Super VGA with VESA driver and IBM RAM, double-speed CD-RDM drive, sound card, mouse. Mac: 68D40/33, 8MB RAM, System 7.0, 16-bit color display, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

Angel Devoid is a fun ride that ends far too quickly to be fully satisfying.

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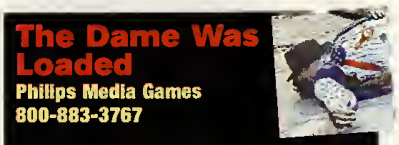
The Dame Was Loaded

There's a fine line between being vintage and being clichéd. Philips' latest mystery adventure, The Dame Was Loaded, falls on the wrong side of that divide. Sure, it's got goons, dames, and crimes of passion—but it ain't Philip Marlowe.

You have three days to locate a Mr. Dan Small. Visit the cops, dig up dirt at the newspaper office, and play a hand of poker at Jake's Joint for tips. Before you know it, you're entangled in a web of corruption and murder in which your partner is killed and your old flame is kidnapped. To make things worse, your own past begins to take on an eerie significance in the case, spicing up the somewhat generic diamond heist story.



The Dame Was Loaded
Philips Media Games
800-883-3767

Platform: DOS CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card, mouse
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Visually, the game delivers a curious mix of full-screen video and still images. The decent-quality video clips introduce locations and scenes, but dialogue often plays only over static screens. Even so, the game play is reasonably enticing. As the mystery unfolds, loads of characters and locations emerge. Every scene features a number of clues and fairly tricky, if not totally logical, puzzles—including jury-rigging a loader with a knife and fork. Also, the ever-ticking game clock is a solid addition. You are constantly racing against nightfall to select the right locations, collect the clues, and solve multiple puzzles.

This damsel in distress may be more than you can handle.

There are some problems, though. Game play is hampered by an awkward interface. Instead of using a fixed menu that displays items and dialogue options, you double-click to call up a notepad. This keeps the screen uncluttered, but seriously complicates simple operations. Also, while the game evokes the spirit of Philip Marlowe, it really only provides tame comic characterizations of people and places. It lacks the dark depravity that makes film noir interesting. Hopefully, the next gumshoe game will reinvigorate the genre, rather than just regurgitate it.

—Bill Meyer

Advertisement

Terror T.R.A.X.

Who do they call when a woman says a monster has broken into her house and taken her eyes? No, not the men in white coats. If they're smart, they'll give T.R.A.X. a ring.

T.R.A.X. (Trace, Research, Analyze, Xterminate) steps in when crime starts to get surreal. As the newly appointed leader of this elite investigative unit, you guide two agents (picture *The X-Files*' Scully and Mulder stuck in a cheesy direct-to-video flick) on a pair of seemingly unrelated missions dealing with the supernatural. Officer Graves has to track down a possible vampire, while Officer Wilkins is searching for an undead convict who's on a scavenger hunt to recover his donated organs. The full-screen, good-quality, full-motion video pauses at critical junctures and asks you to choose between a couple of options. Choose well, and you'll keep your officers alive—and take care of the evil dead.

Officer Wilkins gets off on tracking down those pesky reanimated corpses.

Definitely better than Sony's all-forgettable, all-video Johnny Mnemonic, T.R.A.X.'s storyline actually proves moderately interesting. The game is also surprisingly playable, and I found myself coming back even after dying a cruel and unusual death at the hands of a reanimated serial killer. But T.R.A.X. has a severe problem: It's shorter than your average B-movie. I was able to solve the entire thing—with no hints—in about an hour. At $29.95, that's a pretty steep price for an hour's worth of fun.

In the final analysis, this interactive mix of *The X-Files* and *Forever Knight* may be exciting and playable, but don't blink, or you may miss it.

—*Shane Mooney*

Terror T.R.A.X.
Three-Prong Plug
800-285-4534

Developer: Ground Zero
Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

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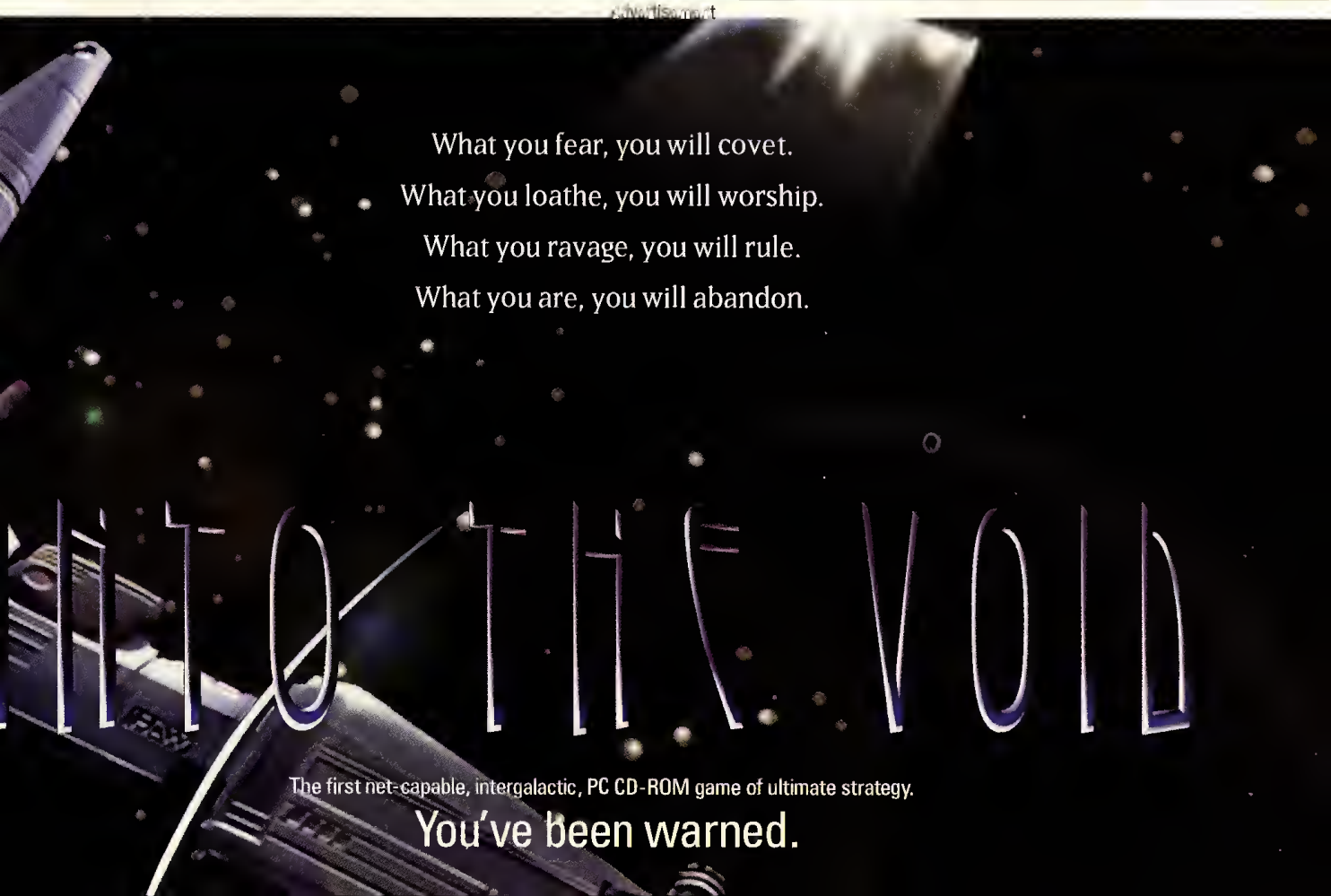


Knight's Chase

Imagine yourself as a young American studying diligently in your room in Paris when an evil knight suddenly appears and tries to separate your head from your body.

That's exactly what happens to poor William Tibbs in I•Motion's latest action/adventure title, Knight's Chase, the first of a three-part series of games called Time Gate. Turns out Tibb's fiancée has somehow been kidnapped by medieval knights and imprisoned somewhere in the 14th century.

As Tibbs, you must journey back in time to rescue your beloved Juliet. To be successful, you'll need top-notch deductive reasoning to solve the game's myriad puzzles—and you'll have to swing a mean sword, too. Along the way, you'll uncover the history of a secret order of knights called the Knight's Templar.

Most of Knight's Chase's puzzles provide a middling challenge, simply forcing you to use everything you have in your inventory on some other object until you get the right match. Combat, however, is another story; one that players of I•Motion's Alone In The Dark series know all too well.

Knight's Chase is entertaining—if you can get past the kludgy controls.

While extremely popular, the Alone titles frustrated many gamers with awkward controls and a shifting third-person perspective that made navigation needlessly difficult. Knight's Chase doesn't improve the situation. You still use the cursor keys to move your character, while pressing the spacebar or Ctrl key to make Tibbs perform actions such as searching corners of rooms or fighting. With practice, moving and searching become bearable. But slow response time and difficult aiming often make fighting an exercise in futility.

The game could look better as well. Painterly backgrounds, sharp cinematics, and cool lighting effects can't overcome the extremely blocky characters.

On the plus side, Knight's Chase has a superb, easy-to-use interface for saving and loading games, selecting the difficulty level, and accessing your inventory. So for those willing to look past the control issues of the Alone games, Knight's Chase should prove a worthy successor. Newbies, on the other hand, may want to stay away.

—Steve Klett

Knight's Chase
I•Motion
800-443-3386

Developer: Infogrames Multimedia
Platform: DOS/Win CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

Torin's Passage

Torin is your typical teenage hero. He's bold, strong, dexterous, handsome, and dumb enough to miss so much that you have to wonder how he stayed alive this long. His own survival isn't the problem, however. Torin's parents have been kidnapped, and the lad must now traverse five worlds to find the one responsible.

Fortunately, in Torin's Passage, our hero has you to guide him. As a result, the journey through this latest adventure from Sierra On-Line is well worth it, for both of you.

Like King's Quest VII: The Princeless Pride, Torin's Passage has Sierra's Disneyesque animation style down pat. The fluid movement; the flowing artwork and visual depth; the bright and beautifully shaded colors; the ridiculously good and gleefully villainous characters. You'll find all of it here.

Torin's about to take a dive.

You'll also find wonderfully animated cinematics that do their job quickly and get out of the way, unlike many adventures that throw a few interminably long and boring sequences at you. The digitized speech and voice acting also prove excellent. Even the boring musical score is easy to ignore when all the other production values are so high.

With Torin's Passage, Al Lowe (of Leisure Suit Larry fame) takes a break from his bawdy beginnings to produce something for the entire family. To that end, you'll find plenty of complex puzzles, some excellent plot twists, and spry visual humor, especially from Torin's shapeshifting pet, Boogle.

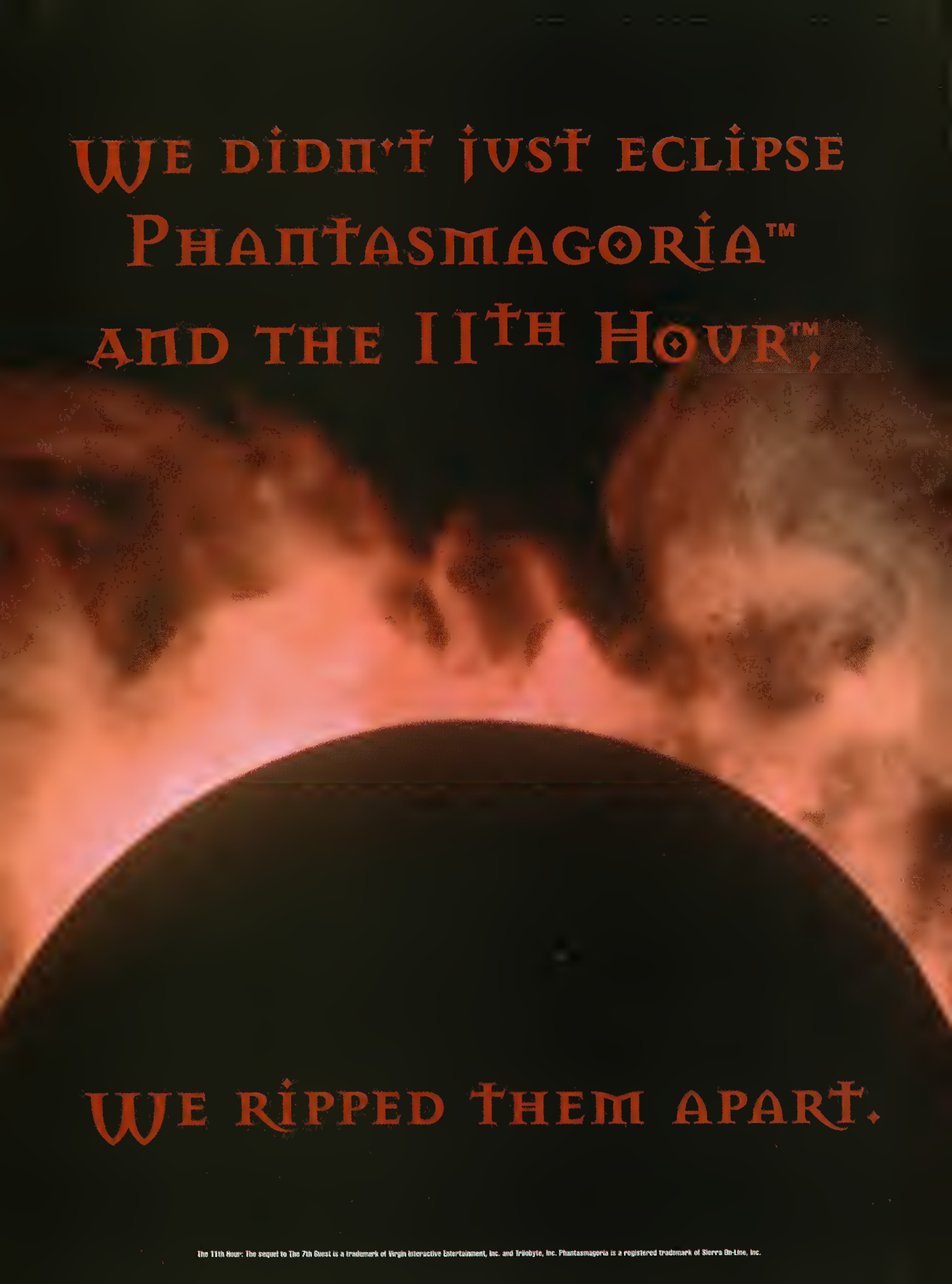
Navigating the game is a breeze thanks to a point-and-click interface; a simple, 3-D inventory system; the ability to rewind and fast-forward through scenes; a book that captures the dialogue for later review; and numerous online hints. But be warned: All this sophistication runs best from a quad-speed CD-ROM drive. Still, if you want a graphics adventure for your entire family, there's nothing better on the market today.

—Barry Brenesal

Torin's Passage
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Platform: DOS/Win CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, 256-color Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2



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- Also starring: Jimmie Walker, Tahnee Welch, David Patrick Kelly, and Ossie Davis

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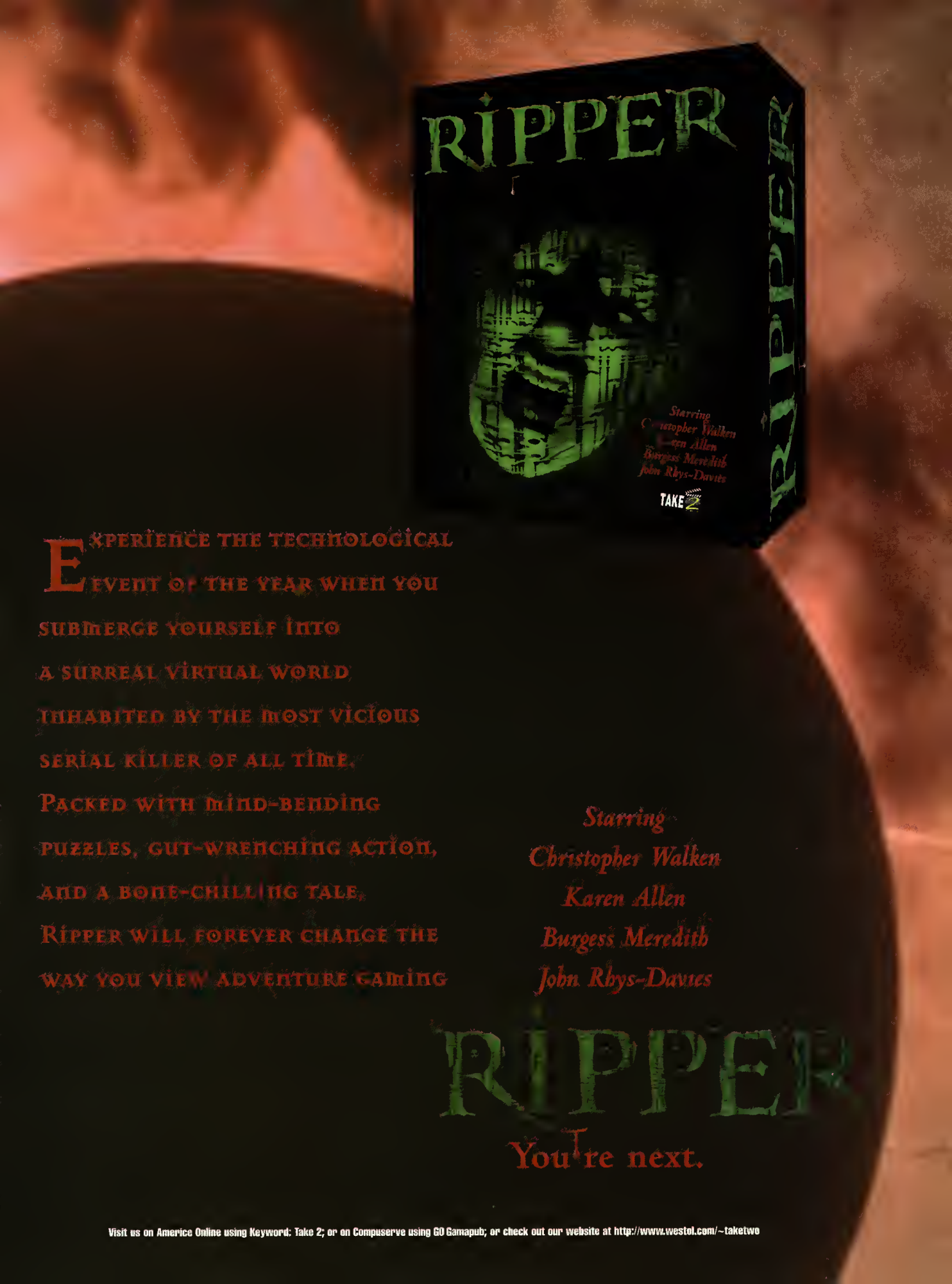

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Curse of Dragor

With Dragor, Mac owners get a compelling RPG of their own.

Domark's first original role-playing game for the Macintosh is a refreshing change from the industry's typical "PC-first, Mac-perhaps" attitude—and Mac role players won't be disappointed.

The land of Xorinth had enjoyed many years of peace. Then the evil prince Dragor returned from his banishment and turned the countryside into a barren wasteland. Xorinth's king, Lord Meridian, holds the key to the land's salvation, but he lies imprisoned by Dragor's curse in the pits of the Underworld. You must lead a group of four adventurers into Xorinthian Castle to find the means to lift the curse and free Meridian, releasing all of Xorinth in the process.

You choose your party of 4 from a field of 15 characters, including warriors, thieves, wizards, alchemists, and scholars. Unfortunately, the "15 characters" are little more than 15 different character portraits, with randomly generated strength, dexterity, and health values. You won't find lengthy discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Elven, Dwarven, and Orcish classes here.

Things get more interesting once your party is transported into the bowels of the castle, where you'll encounter a wide range of fearsome enemies, including giant spiders, mummies, skeletons, and knights. You start out relatively weak, but as you progress in the game and gain experience you'll develop new spells and improved combat skills. You'll have plenty of places to try out those new skills, too. Curse of Dragor boasts more than 5,000 detailed, high-resolution locations to explore and some 500 objects to find and examine.

The step-based, first-person movement and game interface—which forces you to designate which character will pick up, look at, or use each object you find—can prove tedious at times, however. Game play may also prove sluggish on anything but high-end Power Macs. But if you have the patience, Curse of Dragor brings a compelling fantasy experience to a Macintosh world without many role-playing options.

—Steve Klett

Curse of Dragor
Spectrum HoloByte
800-695-4263

Developer: Domark/Banshee Software
Platform: Mac CD
Requires: 33MHz 68030, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $45

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

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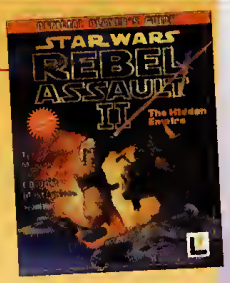
Rebel Assault II Official Player's Guide
By Jeff Hoff
Can you foil Lord Vader's evil plot to destroy the Rebel Alliance? This guide includes strategies, cheat codes, a complete discussion of how to use the Difficulty Editor, and a thorough look at the making of this CD-ROM masterpiece.
$19.99
0763
Platform: PC CD-ROM



The Beast Within Official Player's Guide
By Corey Sandler
Help Gabriel Knight and his capable assistant, Grace, investigate werewolf attacks in Germany. This guide includes a comprehensive walk-through, a hint section, and a look at the creators of this amazing video adventure.
$19.99
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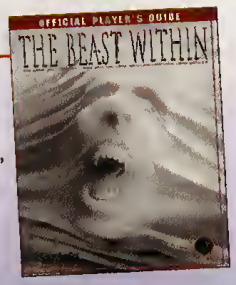
Platform: PC CD-ROM



EarthSiege 2 Official Player's Guide
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Platform: PC CD-ROM

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By Susan Frischer
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Platform: PC CD-ROM

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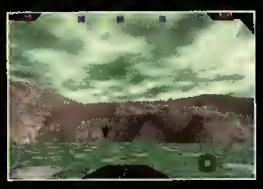

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Get Golfing

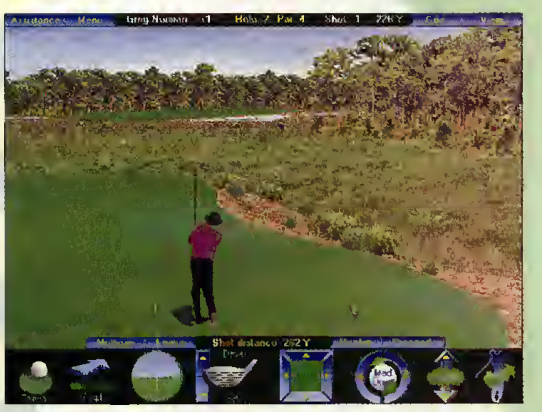
By Bill Meyer

The game engine in Lyriq's Picture Perfect Golf is truly antiquated.

It's time to head for the digital greens again! At least, that's what Grolier Electronic Publishing, Lyriq, and Microsoft would like you to believe. Unfortunately, you won't find a scratch player among these three new duffers. Indeed, only Grolier's Greg Norman: Ultimate Challenge Golf even comes close to keeping up with Electronic Arts' outstanding PGA Tour '96.

Greg Norman: Ultimate Challenge Golf

Norman holds its own by attempting to add a new dimension to computer golf with both an arcade and a unique simulation mode. The sim mode lets you tweak 44 player characteristics, including shot spin, shot consistency, and putting skill. Create an actual model of yourself and hit the links, or build your favorite pros to see how they fare. This cerebral approach could actually help you improve your game as you play through jams you might encounter in a real round. You also play on Norman's course at the Medalist Golf Club and can compete as him or against him. Be warned, though: even on a 16MB Pentium, golfer animations can be choppy and screen changes painfully slow. Nevertheless, for a new kind of golf experience that you can really tailor, Norman's worth a look.



With Greg Norman: Ultimate Challenge Golf's simulation mode, you can create a player just like yourself, slices and all.

Greg Norman: Ultimate Challenge Golf
Grolier Electronic Publishing
800-285-4534

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Picture Perfect Golf: The Coeur d'Alene
Lyriq
800-443-4464

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, sound card
List Price: $29

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★

Picture Perfect Golf: Coeur d'Alene

Lyriq's Picture Perfect Golf is based on one of America's premier courses. Unfortunately, however, the title's game engine is seriously outdated. Thousands of photos appear as backgrounds, making the game feel like a quaint slide show. While at first glance Picture Perfect looks reasonably nice, it's far from a sophisticated golfing experience. The flat photos offer no sense of depth and ball action is totally unrealistic, especially when chipping at the green and putting. To its credit, the game performs smoothly, and the straight-ahead arcade play moves right along, so you can finish a round quickly. Just the same, unless you have a thing for Idaho, pass on this green's fee.

Microsoft Golf 2.0

Microsoft Golf 2.0 is the most disappointing of the new golf sims. It's better than Picture Perfect Golf, but this fairly invisible upgrade adds only one worthwhile new feature: support for PlayerNet, a multiplayer game option that allows matches over a local area network or modem. PlayerNet lets you play fairly engaging rounds of golf against other gamers, something nobody else offers. However, the shoddy video-based pro tips and hole flybys are of little interest. Actual game design hasn't changed, either, so it features the same less-than-elegant interface used in earlier versions. Consider Microsoft Golf 2.0 only if you absolutely must go multiplayer.

Microsoft Golf 2.0 offers rounds of multiplayer golf, but little else.

Microsoft Golf 2.0
Microsoft
800-426-9400

Platform: Win CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 386DX, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, sound card
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★ 1/2

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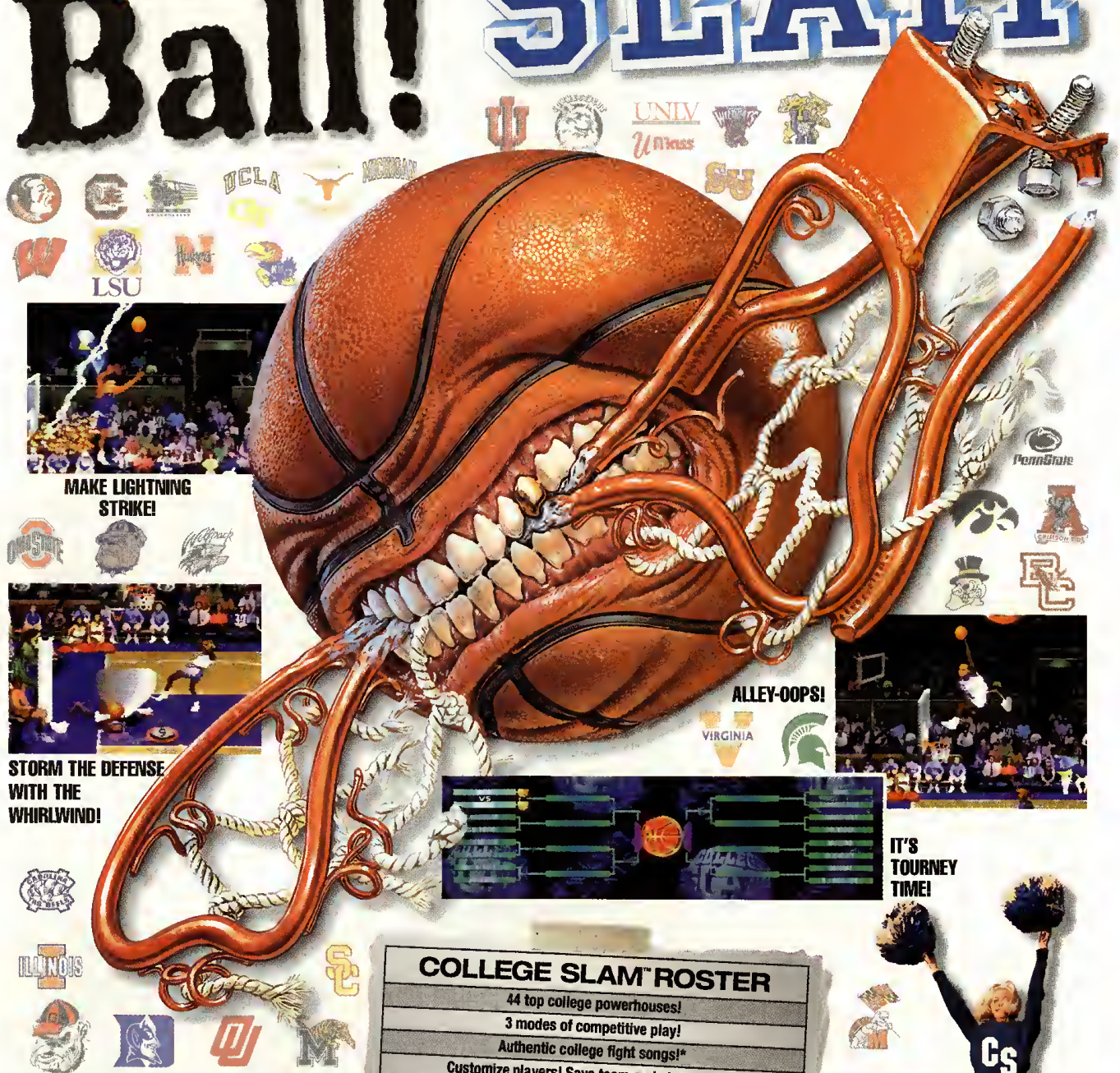

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Acclaim® entertainment inc

Grand Prix Manager

You have to stay in the pits for this sim.

Spectrum HoloByte's Grand Prix Manager should have been subtitled "Auto Racing for People Who Don't Like to Drive."

Filling the gap between the company's popular Grand Prix racing sim and the delayed Grand Prix II, this spreadsheet-with-wheels lets you control the operations of a Formula 1 racing team. Hire designers, engineers, and mechanics. Design and build your cars from the ground up. Woo wealthy sponsors to toss in the bucks needed to make a run for the championship. Recruit the best drivers you can afford. Keep an eye on rule changes and use them to your advantage. Change tactics, manage pit stops, and make dozens of car adjustments on race day.

Sound complicated? It is. With literally hundreds of variables and options, success can be hard to come by. Unfortunately, the game's manual and built-in help feature don't help all that much. For instance, while racing, you have a choice of four different tire compounds, from A to D. However, you won't find an explanation of what the letters mean unless you do a search in the online help file. The manual simply fails to mention this rather important detail.

And details lie at this game's core. To win, you'll have to constantly test, tweak, and test again. Each combination of course, car, weather, and driver requires new optimizations, and finding the best settings is largely a matter of trial and error. Once you've got everything set, you can hit the track. Dot-sized cars zip around the screen while you call for pit stops or radio new strategies. If you'd rather not watch, you can use the "instant resolution" option to speed things up.

Sure, the game's Super VGA graphics and colorful, racing-photography backgrounds look great. But only people absolutely in love with everything Formula 1—including the money side of the business—will want to bother looking at them.

—Christopher Lindquist

Grand Prix Manager
Spectrum HoloByte
800-695-4263

Developer: Simtek
Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

NFL Quarterback Club '96

The biggest gripe many fans have with most PC football sims is that, while they may be great for Jimmy Johnson wanna-bes, they don't do much for people who'd rather be Dan Marino. When it comes to actually jumping onto the field and playing, something's usually missing—like the action.

Leave it to arcade master Acclaim to change all that with NFL Quarterback Club '96. Sideline sitters go home; this is real football.

Actually, Quarterback Club is far from perfect. The graphics—while high-res—look dull, the sound effects quickly become repetitive, and the artificial intelligence can be dense (Third and 19 on the 49ers' 40, and the Broncos have Elway run a *sweep*?). When you go into Simulation mode to play one of the 50 preset situations, you'll also find that the scenarios may be historical, but the players are decidedly modern.

Pittsburgh gets a second chance to do it right.

But it's the game that counts, and this is a good one. Play a preseason contest, start a new season, enter the playoffs, or jump right to a Pro Bowl. You have total control of everything on the field. Pick your offensive and defensive plays from more than 800 options. Call audibles. Substitute players. Then snap the ball and make things happen.

Throw, scramble, run, jump, spin, dive, juke, hurdle, straight-arm—do whatever it takes to get into the end zone. The number of on-field offensive and defensive options may seem daunting at first, but you'll soon be snagging that little burst of speed to make the diving catch or putting a spin move on an offensive lineman as you go for the QB's head. Things get even better if you play against a friend on the same computer. And since the game supports Advanced Gravis' new GrIP system (see review on page 80), you can even square off with three other human players.

If you want to play all the positions, not just coach or quarterback, you don't have any better options. Electronic Arts may field an even better team with its upcoming John Madden football game, but until then, join the Club.

—Christopher Lindquist

NFL Quarterback Club '96
Acclaim Entertainment
516-656-5000

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

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Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of the Emperor

Lavish graphics enhance addictive game play in Shadow of the Emperor.

Battle Isle, one of the first "everyman" war games, has turned into a virtual archipelago over the last five years, with the original game, a scenario disk, Battle Isle '93: The Moons of Chromos, and Battle Isle 2200. Now German developer Blue Byte has set up its own U.S. operation and launched its most ambitious and friendly entry yet: Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of the Emperor.

Battle Isle 2220: Shadow Of the Emperor

Blue Byte
800-933-2983

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 4860X2/66, 8M8 RAM, Windows 3.11, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

In brief, you're cast as the battle eyes and ears for a dead emperor's living brain. You're also a woman, which must be a first for a war game, and you must lead a varied army through 20 rigorous scenarios.

The game itself is lovely. It's beautifully laid out in informative, resizeable, and dragable windows. Battle Isle 2220 is also richly equipped with video and stylish animations (even for things like weather reports), and the uniting story is never that far away. The game strikes an almost ideal balance between ease of use—pure point-and-click with online help—and challenging play.

And it's a well-integrated package. Even the 3-D, noninteractive battle segments fit in, adding a crowning graphical touch in a game full of neat graphical touches.

Unfortunately, this vacation spot does have some swampland. Under Windows 95, I ran into constant "exception" errors and reports of data corruption when trying to load saved games after a cold boot. (This didn't happen under Windows 3.11, but it did display distorted colors when running the video segments.)

Even when they work, there's a lot of waiting around for those videos to load. Moreover, they're in dubbed English, and, on occasion, spoken word and mouth movement don't match up. ("Oh, no! Godzilla!")

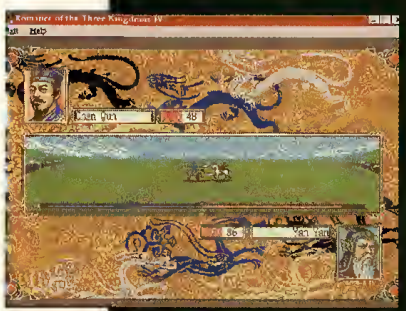
But I don't want to sound fussy. Fix the restore problem, and this is a clear winner.

—Peter Olafson

Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire

Console game players have long received lessons in Chinese history from Koei's popular Romance of the Three Kingdoms series. Now PC players can begin their own tutelage with the fourth edition in the series, Wall of Fire.

Koei appears to be targeting turn-based strategy players who love the cake but don't need any of the icing. You'll find strong strategic game play but none of the graphical or audio flair that dress up today's newest games. Romance's 2-D map may be practical, but it looks downright homely by current standards. And while your advisors, officers, and enemies constantly converse with you, they talk without animation and through text instead of voice.



Expect strong strategy but limited graphics in Romance IV.

Just the same, Wall of Fire has a lot to sink your teeth into. It features six historical scenarios, such as The Battle of Red Wall in 208 A.D., and five fictional games. Even the easiest scenario offers loads of game play. Developing your cities as one of China's great Warlords can be repetitive, but the vast number of responsibilities—cultivating the land, researching technology for war, investing in the economy, and amassing your armies and officers—will definitely keep you busy.

Romance of The Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire

Koei
415-348-0500

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 386, 8M8 RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Once on the attack, a creative array of weapons is at your disposal: set fires, unleash boulders, dig pits, and create confusion in enemy ranks. If you are overmatched on the field, duel an enemy officer to leave your opposition leaderless. You can even plot from afar by sowing dissent in opposing cities via spies or forging temporary alliances to crush another ruler.

Wall of Fire may not be a treat for your eyes, but it has enough thoughtful game play to satisfy serious strategy fans.

—Bill Meyer

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MINDSCAPE®

Baldies

By Christopher Lindquist

Baby, It's *cold* outside! Let's heat things up with a finger of God.

More observant gamers may remember seeing ads or news stories last summer about a silly little strategy game called Baldies. Unfortunately, publisher GameTek was never able to get it out the door. Now, several months and some legal maneuvering later, Baldies finally makes the scene—from Atari Interactive, no less.

Things get pretty hot at higher levels.

The delay is actually good news for gamers, as developer Creative Edge spent the extra time polishing Baldies into a slick—and sick—strategy game that will leave your mouse hand sore and your eyes bleary.

Baldies' battles take place on five worlds over the course of some 100 levels. As in any good real-time combat game, you have buildings to build, dozens of weapons to shoot, and several types of Baldies to work with. But don't think of this as Command & Conquer with a follicle deficiency.

Time for a midnight air raid by an angel-winged Baldie brigade.

For starters, Baldies has a real—and really twisted—sense of humor. You don't even have to do anything to get going. Baldies actually "live" in their little world. Don't touch the controls and they'll go about their business, collecting energy, fighting, taking leaks against the castle walls—whatever. But things really get interesting when you get active. Grab a Baldie and drop him in the water, then save him (or don't) just before he drowns. Plant nasty traps that make enemy troops go snap, crackle, or pop. It's all played out with a wicked grin as you send dozens of Baldies to their doom.

As the game's "god," you have total control over your hairless little minions. Give them one of four jobs—worker, scientist, builder, soldier—and let them collect the various types of "energy" you need to build and create. Start some structures, such as houses or science labs, and stock them with Baldies to breed, invent, protect, or do maintenance. Handle things properly, and you'll be rewarded with new and improved weapons and buildings. Screw up, and you'll watch the enemy waste every one of your cute little chromedomes.

You control all the action via a simple point-and-click interface that makes it easy to access all the game's features. Consult the online "advisor" for good strategy advice. Check the map to follow enemy progress. Move and resize toolbars to suit your fancy. It's easy to play, and even easier to get hooked, especially if you have access to a network for some multiplayer Baldie battles.

Players will probably have only two complaints. No, make that "concerns." First, the goal of each level remains the same every time: Kill *all* the enemies. If you're looking for variety, you won't find it here. Also, things don't really start heating up until you hit levels in the 20s. By that time, you will have spent several hours thinking, "This is fun, but when does the real action start?" Creative Edge might have been wise to include different skill levels that would have let players jump ahead more quickly.

But don't let that discourage you. Baldies may lack the crisp Super VGA graphics of Warcraft II and the stellar sound effects of Command & Conquer, but it has a quirky style all its own.

TIPS

- Once you get a science lab, be sure to try *every* animal in it. You never know what might result.
- Can't grab those fast-moving fish? Click on the exclamation point to slow down game time.
- Use the skunk bomb in conjunction with weapons like the cannon or the Popper to rack up the enemy casualties.
- Check with a scientist every so often to see what new implements of destruction or defense he may have invented.
- Dropping angel-winged Baldies directly on a building usually isn't the best tactic. Instead, position a bunch of Baldies near the target building, then move your "shield" over the structure to tell them where to attack. That way they can do some damage with their grenades. You do have grenades, don't you?
- "Grabbing" a chopper is bad for the fingers.
- Keep an eye out for "warps" and other hidden features that could make your life easier on the next level.

Baldies
Atari Interactive
800-462-8274

Developer: Creative Edge
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 4M8 RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: not available

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

It takes a while to get up to speed, but Baldies adds a sense of fun to the real-time strategy genre.

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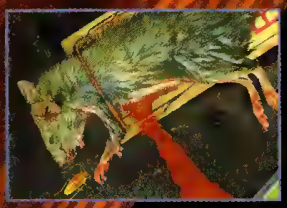

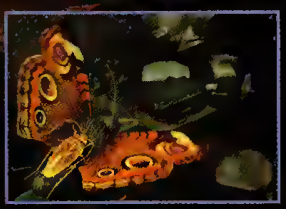

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GrIP MultiPort Interface

By Christopher Lindquist

Tired of playing alone? Wish there was an easy way for you and your buddies to sit down and shoot some hoop together in NBA Live 96? Then it's time to get a GrIP.

GrIP is the latest in joystick technology from Advanced Gravis, maker of all those Phoenix joysticks and GamePads so many gamers are familiar with. But GrIP is more than just another joystick; it's a whole new interface that pushes PC gaming to a higher level.

The GrIP MultiPort Interface lets you connect as many as four GrIP controllers to one computer for intense multiplayer action that modems can't match. Each GrIP controller supports eight buttons, giving you quick access to game features that used to be unreachable. Even better, the GrIP system uses a digital control interface to provide far faster performance than a standard analog joystick.

But wait, there's more. Under Windows 95, you can make each GrIP Pad emulate the keyboard, letting you custom-configure the buttons to your own needs. Got a DOS game that doesn't directly support GrIP? No problem. Put the MultiPort into GamePad emulation mode, and your GrIP Pads will work like standard Gravis GamePads, with a pair of button-configuration options. You can even attach your old joysticks to one of the two "Pass-thru" ports so you don't have to disconnect the GrIP MultiPort when playing flight sims or other games unsuited for a gamepad-style controller.

Finding all this hard to believe? Don't. It actually works. Our test system installed easily and worked flawlessly with Electronic Arts' NHL '96 and NBA Live 96, and with Acclaim's NFL Quarterback Club '96. Onscreen players responded noticeably faster, and the extra buttons made it easy to access all kinds of features (such as play-calling and special moves) that even four-button controllers keep a keyboard's reach away. About the only drawback to the GrIP is that lefties can no longer flip the controller over to suit their style.

So how much will you pay for all this? Less than a hundred bucks— and that includes the MultiPort, two GrIP Pads, *and* a copy of either NHL '96 or Acclaim's Wrestlemania. The GrIP system may be one of the best bargains in the computer entertainment industry. Don't worry about support in future games, either. Advanced Gravis has already lined up support from heavyweights like Acclaim, EA, Dynamix, Microsoft, and Virgin Interactive.

Sports game fans will *have* to own this system, and everyone else will *want* to own it. (Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558; street price $99.95)

Platform: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gravis' GrIP gives PC gamers multiplayer and multibutton control.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

Getting a Better GrIP

GrIP is great, but according to Gravis, this first system is only the tip of the digital iceberg.

Next out of the gate, Gravis expects to ship a "digital proportional controller" in the gamepad style. Unlike traditional digital controllers, which can only send onscreen characters in one of eight directions, digital proportional controllers would provide a full 360° of movement. For example, using the new gamepad, players could make an onscreen soccer player move left, right, up, down, or anywhere in between. Gravis says it hopes to ship the new controllers by fall.

The company believes gamers will eventually have even more options, including controllers with more than eight buttons for even more complex games. Gravis is also looking into controllers with more than the standard *x*- and *y*-axes, allowing easier control in 3-D environments. And flight sim junkies won't be left wanting, either. Gravis also has digital joystick designs on the drawing board.

But don't start looking for any of these new toys anytime soon. None of them are currently slated to ship before 1997. So, in the meantime, just sit back and enjoy your GrIP. —*CL*

Sure, there are cheaper PC, Mac, and 3DO game controllers. But if you're ready to get serious, you need the high-quality, built-to-play-rough peripherals from CH Products.

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Spotlight

Software

LIFE ON THE EDGE

Volcanoes

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

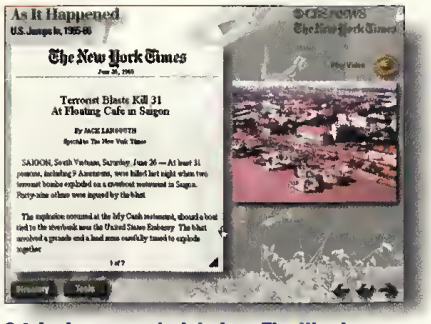
For centuries, man has been intrigued by the red-hot lava that erupts from the earth's fragile crust. Yet with this fascination comes the horror of a volcano's destructive force—devastated cities, charred landscapes, and clouds of ash obscuring the sun. Corbis' **Volcanoes: Life on the Edge** attempts to capture both the awesome beauty and the lasting effects of this powerful natural phenomena.

Life on the Edge is essentially a photojournal of the 14-month adventure of photographer Roger Ressmeyer as he visited key volcanoes around the world. Narrated by actress Helen Mirren, best known for the British TV series *Mystery*, the audio serves as a rich complement to the striking photographs.

Follow the work of prominent scientists in the Volcanologist section; explore famous active volcanoes in Episodes; share the concerns of people who live near volcanoes in In the Shadow; experience the devastation with A Distant Rumble; and get to know Ressmeyer himself in The Photographer. The interface is easy to navigate, and the search feature speeds you to what you're interested in.

The disc's photographs eloquently capture the complex relationship between volcano and man, but Life on the Edge seems to beg for video clips to further illustrate the dynamic drama of volcanic eruptions. (Corbis; 800-336-2947; $45–55) *–Joy J. Ma*

Fire meets water in Volcanoes: Life on the Edge.



Original news material gives The War in Vietnam unmatched authenticity.

THE WAY WE REMEMBER IT

The War In Vietnam

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Unlike previous conflicts, the Vietnam War was played out in living rooms as much as battlefields. For the first time, Americans witnessed the horrors of war on the 6 o'clock news.

So it's fitting that MacMillan Digital USA's **The War in Vietnam** taps the archives of CBS News and *The New York Times* to bring the war to CD-ROM in the way most people remember it.

Mixing more than 1,000 *Times* news reports (including 600 photos) with 40 minutes of CBS News footage, this disc recalls both the horror and the fascination, the intensity and the confusion that reigned during this turbulent period. Unlike other multimedia explorations of the Vietnam conflict (Medio's Vietnam and Magnet's Beyond The Wall, for example), The War In Vietnam stirs the same emotions as the original events.

It's all here, from Tet to My Lai and Hanoi bomb raids to Kent State, reported as it happened. Narrated by Dan Rather and *Times* Washington bureau chief R. W. Apple, the hyperlinked disc lets you browse a chronology of Vietnamese and stateside events, scan biographies of important figures, peruse original maps, learn about key weapons, and search a complete list of the names on the Vietnam Memorial. Following a recent trend (see "CD-ROMs Go Online," March 1996, page 34), the disc includes links that send you directly to The Wall area on America Online and related Internet sites.

While the material packs a heavy wallop, the dry interface, slow performance, and balky navigation do lessen the impact. And though the title includes former defense secretary Robert McNamara's dramatic 1995 apology for the war, there could have been a bit more historical perspective. On the other hand, reading the optimistic promises to have our boys home by the end of 1965 makes the folly of the enterprise perfectly clear. (MacMillan Digital USA; 800-716-0044; $49.95) *–Fredric Paul*

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Consumer Reports Cars

Format: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Smart shoppers have used *Consumer Reports* to get the best car value for their money for some six decades. Now, the venerable institution's car-buying advice comes to CD-ROM.

Consumer Reports Cars dresses up the magazine's helpful info.

Unlike the somewhat breathless car-buying discs from enthusiast magazines such as *Car and Driver* and *Automobile*, **Consumer Reports Cars: The Essential Guide** takes a no-nonsense approach, much like the magazine itself. You won't find sexy videos of sleek machines gliding down gorgeous stretches of wide-open road here. Instead, you get hard information such as frequency-of-repair records, financial and fuel-economy calculators, and video lessons on how to negotiate with dealers.

All good stuff, and more attractively presented than it is in the magazine. Better still, some of the instructional videos, how-it-works animations, and photographs actually add value to the printed information.

But the folks at Consumers Union (which publishes *Consumer Reports*) shouldn't be too pleased with the fit and finish of its disc, developed by Creative Multimedia. The "interactive video negotiating lessons," for example, aren't very inter-

active—the answers are the same no matter how you respond. And the text on many screens is cut off at the bottom.

Consumer Reports Cars isn't exactly a lemon, but it's no cream puff, either. (Creative Multimedia; 800-331-1369; $19.99)

—Fredric Paul

LIMITED EDITION

San Francisco 49ers

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

These days, watching pro football on TV has become a slick, impersonal, corporate experience. For a more down-to-earth look at life behind the scenes in the NFL, check out the **San Francisco 49ers Limited Edition Trading Disc.**

Hosted by injured fullback William "Bar None" Floyd, the title whisks you, "the No. 1 49ers fan," into a stretch limo for interactive video visits to the team's Rocklin training camp, Niner headquarters, and, of course, the locker room. You can also meet the Gold Rush cheerleaders and stroll the sidelines of 3COM Park on game day. (Just be sure to pick up the VIP pass at headquarters; you'll need it to get on the field.) Along the way you can enjoy short interactive conversations with Niners stars like Steve Young and Jerry Rice.

The title's original video has a home-movie feel that's a welcome relief from the pretentious tones of most NFL coverage. But Floyd himself, who also raps the soundtrack to U.S. Gold's Shell Shock action game, is the best part. His infectious warmth and enthusiasm make you feel like part of the team. I only wish there was more of him on the disc, explaining what you're watching in the videos. (For more on Floyd, see Star Talk, page 15.)

The 49ers disc is the first in U.S. Gold's planned series on other NFL teams and star players from other major sports. That's important, because while 49ers fans may find the autographed package (by Floyd) worth the rather steep price, Cowboys fans, for example, definitely won't. (U.S. Gold; 415-693-0297; $69.95)

—Fredric Paul

Host William Floyd is the best part of the 49ers Trading Disc.

NEW ENHANCED CDS

The Music Box

The strange and quirky dominate this month's crop of enhanced music CDs. Consider **Primus:** The California trio's offbeat lyrics and intricate musical structures clearly influence the multimedia on **Tales From The Punchbowl—The Enhanced CD.** Getting used to the disc's environment is slow going, especially if you're not using a Pentium or Power Mac. But the payoff is absolutely exquisite animation, often generated by developer ION from computer animations done by band members Les Claypool and Larry "Ler" Lalonde. The detail on such tunes as "Southbound Pachyderm" and "Hellbound 17 1/2" easily tops anything done on enhanced CD so far. Toss in the logbook section, where you can "play" drummer Tim "Herb" Alexander's massive kit and watch outtakes from the goofy "Wynonna's Big Brown Beaver" video (also included on the disc in its entirety), and the result is superb multimedia. (Interscope; 310-208-6547; $17.98)

Primus: Tales from The Punchbowl
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Then there's Canada's **Barenaked Ladies,** whose **Shoe Box** enhanced CD single is heavy on video shot at a 1995 performance in Chicago. Since this is a band that delights in such goofball stunts as having their own barbecue chef onstage during a show, the video segments—reasonably clear even at double-size—are well worth watching. Cartoons and detailed band info make Shoe Box a solid multimedia disc. Just be sure to turn off the annoying voices attached to the opening screen icons (the V key takes care of them). (Reprise Records; 818-846-9090; $17.99)

Barenaked Ladies: Shoe Box
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Monster Magnet weighs in with yet a third unusual effort, **I Talk To Planets.** The disc frames the band's hard, psychedelic rock with grungy video segments, exploding asteroids, and a dumb-but-fun space-shooter game, among other treats. Animations from developer Luminaire are crystal-clear, but it'll take a couple of passes to master the unintuitive interface, including one icon that takes you to the exit sequence with no warning. The title will also munch nearly 10MB on your hard drive when you install it. (A&M Records; 213-469-2411; $17.95)

Monster Magnet: I Talk To Planets
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

On a more "serious" note, there's the enhanced soundtrack to ***Nixon,*** the controversial film by Oliver Stone. Stone and composer John Williams appear in video interviews about the music and its role in the movie. The disc includes the movie's trailer and also serves as a preview for a full Nixon CD-ROM from developer Graphix Zone. The excellent interface used here points to a promising effort. (Hollywood Records/ Graphix Zone; 818-560-5670; $16.98)

Nixon
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

—Donald St. John

Elephants sighted near San Francisco's Bay Bridge! Call Primus for information.

Oliver Stone talks music and movies, not politics, on the *Nixon* soundtrack.

Spotlight

UNHOLY TRINITY

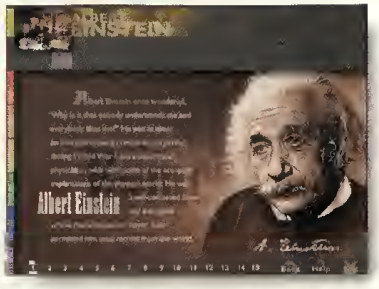
Critical Mass

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Everything–literally–changed on July 16, 1945, the day Manhattan Project scientists successfully tested the first atomic bomb. The fascinating events leading up to the fateful "Trinity" test are the subject of Corbis' **Critical Mass: America's Race to Build the Atomic Bomb**.

This Windows CD follows on the heels of Voyager's excellent The Day After Trinity, and will almost inevitably be compared to it. In most respects, it comes out well, particularly in its design: Critical Mass' totally intuitive and responsive interface organizes its material superbly. You won't have any trouble finding detailed profiles of the scientists who ran the arms race (well beyond Manhattan Project leader J. Robert Oppenheimer, the chief focus of Voyager's title); the physics of the bomb; and political and cultural context for the rise of atomic science and weaponry.

Corbis doesn't skimp on the multimedia, either. Video clips move from the tests themselves to such post-war events as the Rosenberg spy trial, and a generous audio sampling brings the voices of Manhattan Project participants to life. Even more telling are the archival documents, including Albert Einstein's warning to President Roosevelt about the feasibility of the bomb.



Albert Einstein laid the groundwork for the atomic bomb.

Critical Mass' few flaws center on the melodramatic opening, a "newsreel" of events leading to the bomb effort. Also, the title recounts the post-war years of the Cold War atomic race in a kitchen-sink manner, introducing material that adds nothing in the way of context. Best to glance at that and concentrate on the many well-done portions. (Corbis; 800-336-2947; $45–$55)

–Donald St. John

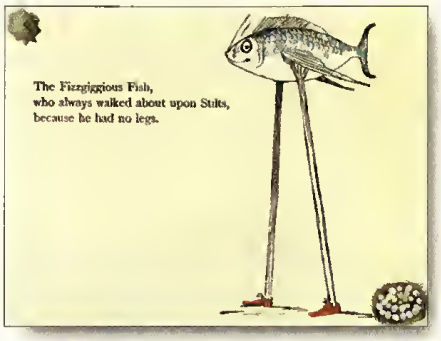
CATS AND CANARIES

Eyewitness Virtual Reality

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Discover amazing facts about our furry and feathered friends on a virtual museum tour provided by DK Multimedia. **Eyewitness Virtual Reality Cat** and **Bird** bring to life two of the company's wonderfully entertaining Eyewitness Books with audio and video clips of these extraordinary creatures.

Cat and Bird explore not only the history of the cat and bird families, but also their habitats, personalities, and survival techniques. And you won't just get up close and personal with house cats and seagulls. You'll witness baby birds hatching, speeding cheetahs bringing down their prey, and ancient art depicting the mythology surrounding these animals. Other highlights of the Bird disc include in-depth exhibits on various species and sound booths where you can listen to different bird calls. The Cat "exhibit" offers up games to test your knowledge and charts to illustrate whether your favorite feline is doomed for extinction.

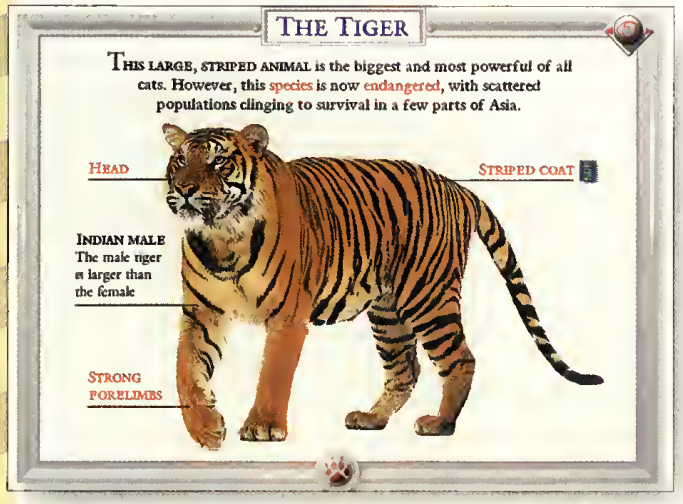


Only in the mind of Edward Lear did fish walk on stilts.

The pair of discs covers just about every related topic imaginable as you take a splendid first-person stroll through the museum. Users can wander at their own pace or join one of the many included tours, such as the Conservation tour or the Flight tour. You can also stop at the Museum Store to download your favorite animal sounds and print out themed stationery.

Animal lovers and just-plain-curious types will find hours of fun with these engaging discs. Look for upcoming titles on sharks, dinosaurs, and jungles. (DK Multimedia; 800-356-6575; street price $29.95 each)

–Sue Kim



Eyewitness Virtual Reality is the Cat's meow. Bird lovers will like it, too.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense

Platform: Enhanced CD for Win/Mac
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Doggerel–limericks, whimsical poetry, and the like–has its place in life, but do you need more than just an occasional fix? If so, **Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense** is definitely for you. Maxima New Media has taken the unusual drawings and poetry of Lear, the 19th-century British writer/illustrator best known for "The Owl and the Pussycat," and set them into a pleasant little book/CD-ROM combination.

Lear, along with contemporary Lewis Carroll, practically defined whimsy; his works are echoed by descendants ranging from Dr. Seuss to Monty Python. Much of the disc incorporates Lear's creations nicely, particularly the drawings: a fish walks on stilts to the accompaniment of light jazz, a "Melodious Meritorious Mouse" plays a minuet before grabbing cheese hidden underneath the keyboard, and so on. The interface is simple–even minimalist–but responds nicely, and the addition of enhanced CD audio readings is a nice bonus.

Unfortunately, Victorian humor doesn't always update too well; many of the limericks in the Crazy Colors and Funny Faces sections will seem trite to adults. For that reason, you may want to share this title with your kids. You'll also spend a lot of time waiting for the disc to jump from one multimedia snippet to the next. Still, the Book of Nonsense may prove a perfect tonic for those times when life gets too serious. (Maxima New Media; 800-667-4988; $24.95) *–Donald St. John*

Introducing Silent Thunder: A10 Tank Killer II. 24 action-packed missions take you through Central America, the Middle East and Korea in one of the most devastating ground attack planes ever created. Huge explosions and texture-mapped terrain reduce other flight sims to twisted wreckage. See why PC Gamer Magazine says "The terrain graphics are unquestionably some of the the best ever seen in a flight sim." And yes, they are real screen shots. **Even the big one!**

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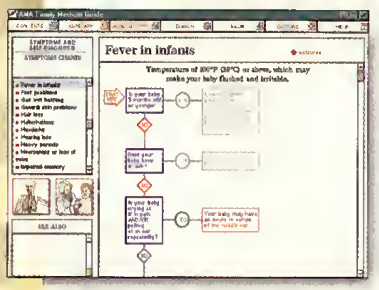
Spotlight

WHAT'S UP, DOC?

Family Medical Guide

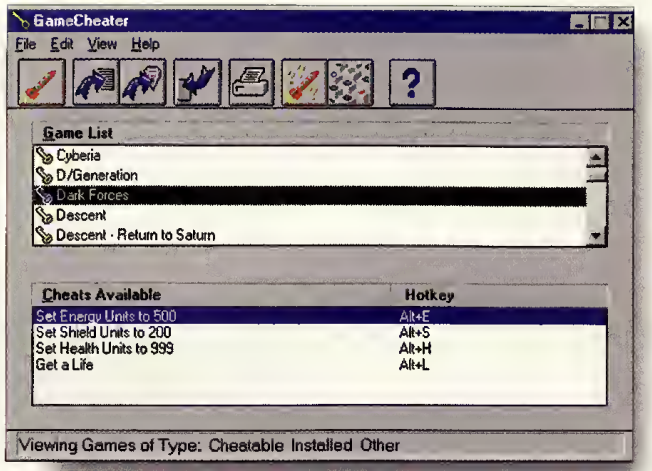
Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

DK Multimedia's **American Medical Association Family Medical Guide** is the digital way to ensure there's always a doctor in the house. While not as comprehensive as IVI Publishing's excellent Mayo Clinic Family Health–you can't track your health records, look up drug interactions, or get online updates, for example–the Family Medical Guide boasts the unique and practical Pain Site Diagnosis section. This feature helps you find out what ails you by audibly walking you through a flow-chart of symptoms for 650 illnesses.



Go with the flow in the AMA's Family Medical Guide.

The Family Medical Guide also sports a useful Body Atlas and an easy-to-navigate interface. If you've got young children or you're a bit of a hypochondriac, this disc may be just what the doctor ordered. (DK Multimedia; 800-356-6575; street price $49.95) *–Christine Grech*



Quarterdeck's GameRunner 3 can make your PC a more powerful play machine.

TOOLS FOR BETTER PLAY

GameRunner 3

Platform: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Quarterdeck's latest incarnation of its GameRunner gaming enhancement package leaves the original far behind (see review, October 1995, page 28). Like its forebearer, **GameRunner 3** includes a "Game Edition" version of the latest QEMM memory manager to get more conventional memory for your games; a high-speed, easily configurable disk cache to make disk accesses faster; and the Game Cheater, a package that adds "cheat codes" to help you through nearly 120 games.

But where the first GameRunner seemed a hodge-podge of separate utilities, GameRunner 3 presents a more composed facade. The whole package comes on three floppies, with a single manual, making for easy installation. However, like the original, the utilities' usefulness varies.

QEMM is a must-have for any gamer. This memory manager is great for prying every bit of free conventional memory out of a system to make room for RAM-ravenous games. The Game Edition of QEMM 8 lacks a few Windows-specific features found in the full version, but nothing most gamers will miss. QuickCache86 is easier to use and configure than Microsoft's SmartDrive, but since many games require you to remove all disk caches anyhow, at times it may only get in your way.

Game Cheater is the most intriguing–and most frustrating–part of the package. It sounds great: By launching your games from within the Cheater, you get access to new cheats, such as adding runs to your total in Hardball 5 or credits to your coffers in Command & Conquer. Unfortunately, the cheats are often specific to a version of a game. If you have a version different than the one Game Cheater is looking for (say, because of a bug fix), you may be out of luck.

Regardless, for less than $30, GameRunner 3 provides a good value–even if you only use QEMM. (Quarterdeck; 800-683-6696; street price $29.95) *–Christopher Lindquist*

SEEING RED

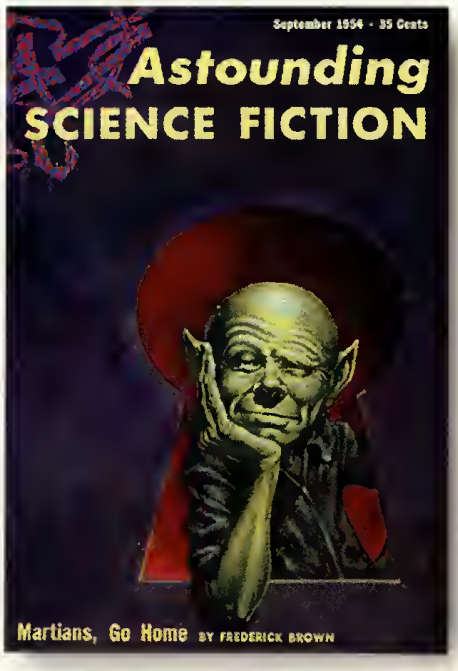
Visions of Mars

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★

Visions of Mars has a higher purpose–real high: Two copies of the disc are destined for Martian soil via Russia's mission to the red planet later this year.

Developer Virtual Reality Laboratories hopes that this record of Earth's fascination with Mars will be uncovered by future colonists. What they'll find is a verbose title featuring 76 dense works of literature and non-fiction, more than 60 paintings and sketches, 4 audio greetings to Mars' future groundbreakers, and the entire original "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast.

The broadcast, along with archive tapes from the Viking One landing, is fascinating. So is the fact that, in their recorded greetings, authors Carl Sagan, Arthur C.



Visions of Mars is no earth-bound CD-ROM.

Babylon 5

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

The Babylon 5 Entertainment Utility–a new collection of wallpaper, sound clips, and a screen saver–may be a limited edition (of 100,000!), but it's a must-have for the series' faithful. Fans of the syndicated *Star Trek* wannabe will find more than 100 images, 50 audio clips, and a handful of video clips from the show. (Sound Source Interactive; 805-494-9996; $24.95)

–Sue Kim

-SOME THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT UNDISCOVERED-

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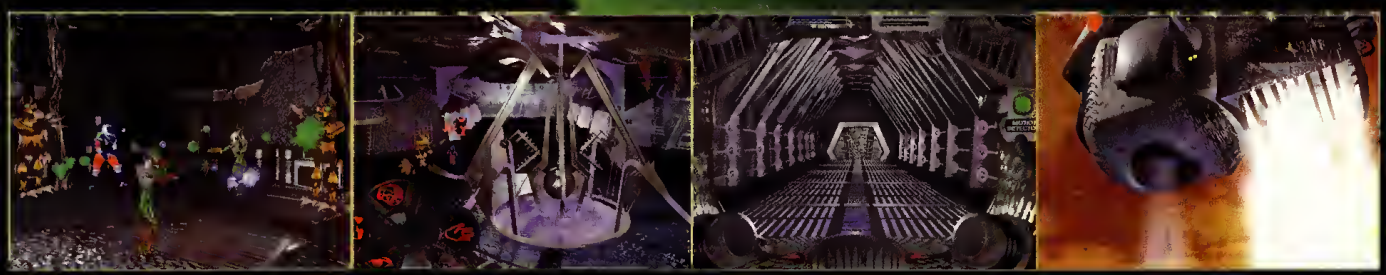

Actual screen shots shown

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Spotlight

Clarke, and Judith Merrill seem sincere about communicating with future colonists.

Yet, despite its wealth of content, Visions of Mars is more time capsule than inspired multimedia. For instance, the disc includes all the important examples of Martian literature–from Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* to Sagan's *Cosmos*–but provides nothing to introduce or explain the texts. And you have to painfully sift through each work page by page. The interesting images also lack commentary.

It's true, you just might appreciate this record of Mars if you uncovered it on another planet. But those of us on Earth should leave it buried. (Virtual Reality Laboratories; 800-829-8754; $69.95) *–Bill Meyer*

Hardware

BIG 'N' BAD SPEAKERS

Multimedia Labs' PCAMP-1490-7SUB

Platform: PC/Mac
Rating: ★★1/2

Multimedia Labs' PCAMP-1490-7SUB speakers will impress your friends mightily–until you turn on the sound.

This large-scale speaker/amplifier system looks terrific. In addition to a pair of solid lunchbox-sized speakers, you get a passive (unpowered) subwoofer about the size of an oddly stacked 12-pack of beer. What makes the PCAMP-1490-7SUB stand out, though, is a separate amplifier/control panel that fits neatly under your monitor stand; it's a design that's typical for hi-fis but unusual in multimedia computing.

In theory, this system's sound should be thrilling. Multimedia Labs rates the amplifier at a brawny 40 watts per channel, with less than 1 percent total harmonic distortion. That's mediocre by audio standards, but far superior to most multimedia speaker systems.

Unfortunately, your ears will have to strain to hear all that good stuff. Although the PCAMP-1490-7SUB moves a satisfying amount of air, it really doesn't sound that great. Even after you play with the equalizer, the system produces weak and undefined bass response. The midrange voices sound thin and reedy, while the high end delivers an annoying rasp.

The PCAMP-1490-7SUB takes up a lot of space and delivers plenty of volume, and you can buy all the components individually. But if it's great computer sound you want, you can do better for less. Try Cambridge SoundWorks' $200 SoundWorks system. (Multimedia Labs, 800-850-7272; $299) *–Fredric Paul*

In speakers, bigger isn't necessarily better.

Boldly watch TV where no one has watched before.

TV ON THE PC

AITech TVR-202

Platform: Windows
Rating: ★★★

Buying a TV card for your computer makes no sense at all. Why spend several hundred dollars to turn your $2,500 PC into a half-baked imitation of a $250 TV set?

Yet, there's something very, very cool about watching TV on your computer monitor. Somehow, you–and whatever stupid show you happen to be watching–seem to be on the cutting edge of technology.

If you've got the TV/PC bug, you could do worse than **AITech's TVR-202** card. The TVR-202 delivers decent resolution and still-video capture capabilities. It also includes FM radio reception.

But there are some problems. The stills tend to be blurry, and you'll find the software a bit kludgy. You'll have to muck around with all sorts of onscreen dials and controls to make the picture work properly, and the radio dial's preset mechanism is somewhat tricky. Worse, the installation software conflicted with the video chip in the IBM Aptiva A50 we tested the card on, rendering the Windows 95 desktop unreadable until we ran a DOS program. AITech suggested changes in the WIN.INI file to solve the problem, and said it would contact IBM about a permanent fix.

But hey–even if TV on the PC isn't quite ready for prime time, life on the bleeding edge has its rewards: Viewed on the computer, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* seems even more futuristic than ever. (AITech International; 510-226-8960; $299) *–Fredric Paul*

CD-ROM FOUR-WHEELIN'

MultiSpin 4x4

Platform: PC
Rating: ★★★1/2

Long gone are the days of single-speed CD-ROM drives. Heck, even double-speed drives are old hat. Why not go for upgrade overkill with the NEC **MultiSpin 4x4 CD-ROM Changer**?

The "4x4" part means that the unit is not only a quad-speed CD-ROM player, but also holds up to four discs at once. NEC packs it all into the 5¼-inch form factor of a standard internal CD-ROM drive.

The MultiSpin sports a nifty roller mechanism that accepts and loads discs one at a time, then stacks them,

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

You blasted your way through an onslaught of undead marines and hell-spawned hordes in Doom, Ultimate Doom and Doom II. Now you can retire, right? Wrong.
Seems flesh-eating mutants have the mortality rate of a cockroach and are alive and kicking in Final Doom - the last of the legendary Doom products. It's two new 32-level episodes complete with new stories (Evilution & The Plutonia Experiment), new frighteningly realistic graphics and new pulse-pounding music. It's time to finish what you started.
OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE,
THEY JUST TURN INTO
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MUTANT ZOMBIES
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Spotlight

so you don't have to mess with a tray or caddie. An included software utility tells you the position of each disc in the drive and lets you switch among them with a few mouse clicks. It's a little loud, but it'll impress your friends. Getting everything working is a breeze, thanks to the setup video and diagram that NEC provides.

Four discs at four-speed.

With a street price of less than $300, the 4x4's not a bad deal for such a neat toy, but practically speaking, it may be hard to justify the expense. You'll still need to physically swap those Wing Commander III discs yourself, as you will with many of your Windows-based multidisc games. However, if you spend most of your time in Windows and have three or four favorite titles that you use frequently–like Encarta and the Sting enhanced CD running alongside MechWarrior 2–the MultiSpin is the drive for you. (NEC Technologies; 800-632-4636; street price $279) *–Steve Klett*

NAME RECOGNITION

Dell Dimension XPS PRO 120c

Platform: PC
Rating: ★★★★

These days, the old adage "you can't see the forest for the trees" can be used to describe the process of shopping for a new PC. Often, the list of "free" software bundled with a machine is so impressive that it's easy to overlook the credentials of the computer itself.

Well, you definitely won't have that problem with the **Dell Dimension XPS PRO 120c.** In fact, the system we tested didn't include any bundled software other than Windows 95.

Now, is that because Dell expects you to pay more for its name recognition, or because the company is so confident in the quality of its product that it's willing to let it speak for itself? While I think the answer to this question is probably *both*, you can certainly make a strong case for the latter.

The 120c is one fast machine, sporting a 120MHz Pentium processor with 256KB of Pipeline Burst Cache (allowing quicker multitasking), 16MB of EDO RAM, and a 64-bit PCI video card with 2MB of RAM. Throw in a Maxtor 1GB hard drive; a Teac 6X CD-ROM drive; a Creative Labs AWE 32 sound card; an Altec Lansing ACS 31 three-piece speaker system; a 15-inch, .28 dot-pitch Dell monitor; and a U.S. Robotics Sportster 28.8Kbps internal modem–all name-brand components–and Dell doesn't leave you wanting in the quality or performance departments.

Of course, all this hardware comes at a price: $2,979, to be exact. But when you consider what you're getting, and the fact that you get toll-free tech support for the life of the system (plus a 30-day money-back guarantee), that's actually a pretty reasonable price. (A base version of the 120c without the modem and speakers, and with a quad-speed CD-ROM drive instead of the 6X player, is available for $2,199.)

The 120c is a dream to set up, thanks to clearly labeled connections and a walk-through setup poster. We had the XPS up and running in about 15 minutes with no troubles.

Better yet, the 120c ran virtually everything we threw at it without breaking a sweat, including Activision's MechWarrior 2, Looking Glass Software's Terra Nova, Ocean's EF2000, and Electronic Arts' NBA Live 96 (all on the highest detail settings). Only Origin's CyberMage running in full-screen Super VGA mode proved an exception, but it ran smoothly when we reduced the screen size by a third. Normally, high-res CyberMage will make even a high-end Pentium with 32MB of RAM choke.

All these games installed smoothly and ran without complications, thanks to the 120c's name-brand components, which means you should encounter very few compatibility issues. And each game produced stellar sound effects courtesy of the system's AWE 32 and Altec speakers.

If you have the cash and don't mind foregoing a bunch of bundled software (which is usually composed of hits that have passed their prime–if you're lucky), you can't go wrong with the XPS PRO 120c. (Dell Computer; 800-727-3355; $2,979) *–Steve Klett*

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

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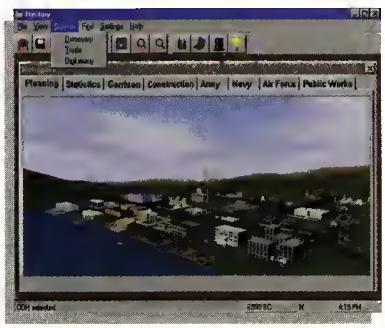

You make all the decisions that affect your destiny.
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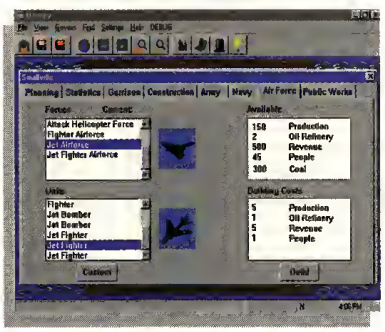
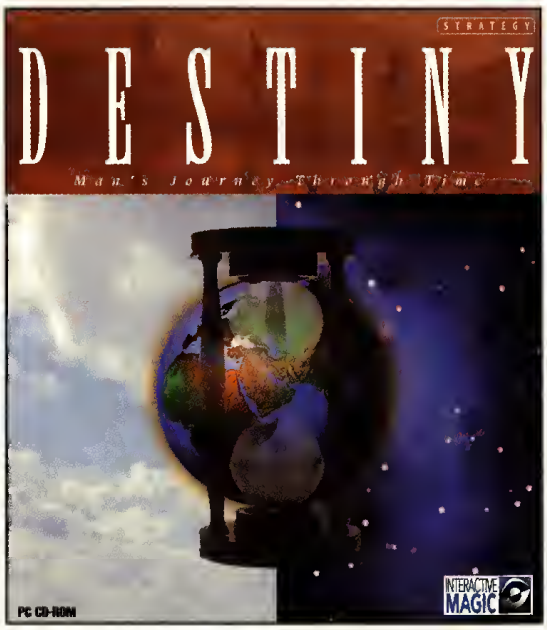
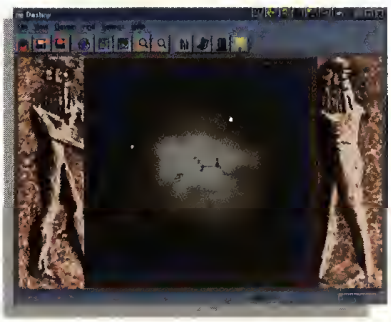
And ultimately, you determine the fate of the entire universe.



In the tradition of the great strategy games that came before it, Destiny puts you in charge. But unlike any God game you've ever played, or even seen before, Destiny allows you to walk among your subjects in a 3-D world. Now you can strategize like a real general -- hide your troops behind a hill and take the enemy by surprise!



With Destiny, you don't have to play a full campaign. Choose from multiple scenarios with both military and scientific victory options. Pit yourself against a highly intuitive AI operating under Win '95® or compete via network or modem.



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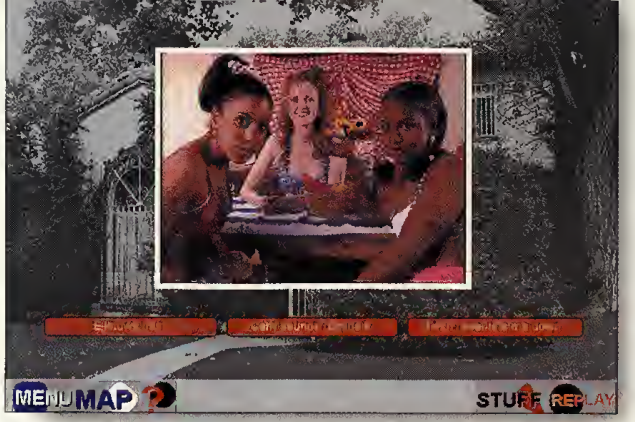
Spotlight

Edutainment

BOY (AND GIRL) TROUBLE

McKenzie & Co.

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★★



Whose advice will land you the prom date in McKenzie & Co.?

You've heard the lament: "Where are all the games for girls and women?" Now, with the arrival of one of the first titles designed by women for young women, Her Interactive's **McKenzie & Co.**, you'll hear a new complaint: "*This* is supposed to entice young women to spend time at the computer?" I don't think so.

The object of the five-CD, full-motion-video high-school simulation is to get to the prom with the date of your choice. There are stops along the way for shopping at real-life stores, makeovers, and hanging out with friends.

While many people will be offended by the game's premise, that's not its biggest problem. The game simply isn't very compelling.

Players take on the role of Kim, an Asian-American gymnast, or Carly, a Caucasian actress, and then decide which of two boys to pursue. The first-person-perspective action unfolds in a video window, as players select dialogue and action choices to advance the action. The young women can be aloof or straightforward when they encounter their dream date, for example.

Along the way, the game presents "dilemmas" that supposedly test the player's loyalty to her friends; her ability to balance work, school, and social life; and her basic decency. (Do you waste time talking to the geek or not?) But because the game lacks win-or-lose scenarios, there's often little to distinguish these choices and their outcomes.

McKenzie & Co. also includes "Mini-Games," the equivalent of doing your homework or working after school. These simple arcade ripoffs are on par with bad shareware.

The game has other serious problems. Players must constantly swap discs as they move about to the game's different locations and activities, and regardless of the girl-boy match-up, the game plays the same: different faces, same basic dilemmas. The other activities—makeovers and shopping—also grow old fast.

Her Interactive has other projects in the works; let's hope these more effectively challenge and stimulate girls than McKenzie & Co. (Her Interactive; 800-561-0908; $59.95)

–Christine Grech

LITTLE BIG FUN

The Indian in The Cupboard

Platform: Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★★★ 1/2

Disney's not the only company spinning off movies to edutainment CD-ROMs. Viacom's **The Indian in the Cupboard** uses the same premise as last year's film—a boy brings toys to life by placing them in a magic cupboard—to teach children ages 6 and up about Iroquois culture.

Little Bear, the boy's diminutive sidekick, guides players through the game as they revive eight other figures and travel back with them to 18th-century America. Each character has something important to teach: animal-tracking, trading, constellations, native games, head-dress making, beading, music, and stories. Players master each activity to earn a part of a Wampum belt and ultimately win the game.

Unlike the movie, most of the game takes place in and around the Iroquois village. Kids will find the activities fun and challenging and are certain to learn something about the Iroquois. One disappointment, though, is that the title confines players to a specific portion of the village and its surroundings, never letting them explore the whole environment. Another letdown: The dolls' transformation from toy to human isn't quite as magical as it was in the live-action movie. (Viacom New Media; 800-469-2539; $49.95) *–Christine Grech*

Little Bear and friends teach kids about Iroquois culture in The Indian in the Cupboard.

MOVIE MAKEOVERS

Disney Hits & Misses

The Lion King Activity Center
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating:: ★★★★

Disney's Animated StoryBook: Pocahontas
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★ 1/2

Choose from eight games and a bunch of art activities in the Lion King Activity Center.

The Lion King and *Pocahontas* live on in a pair of new edutainment titles. Both products borrow heavily from their popular predecessors, but that doesn't always result in success.

Disney has a hit with **The Lion King Activity Center.** This collection of games and activities hosted by the movie's characters has something to please everyone: mazes, puzzles, hide-and-seek, matching, spelling, and a game similar to tic-tac-toe, plus coloring, stamps, connect-the-dots, and movie clips.

The Activity Center guarantees long play time and minimal frustration by giving kids three levels of difficulty for each game, the option to play against a real-life friend, and a clue feature for help when they're stuck. The top-notch graphics and amusing character antics will have little ones convinced they really are visiting the Pride Lands.

The same can't be said for **Disney's Animated StoryBook: Pocahontas.** This title boils down the retelling of historic events into 14 screens that feature some pretty—but far from movie-quality—art, often with small and pixelated characters. Kids can read along at their own pace or have Grandmother Willow take them through the whole thing.

Disney throws in four simple, yet frustrating games. The shooting game, for example, doesn't show you where your arrows fall when you miss the target, making it hard to correct your aim. And even grown-ups will be stumped at naming the correct habitats in the animal identification game. Take a pass on this title, unless your child is a die-hard *Pocahontas* fan. (Disney Interactive; 800-228-0988; street price $30 each) *–Christine Grech*

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TECH SHOP

By David Gerding

Interactive Home Theater

Imagine this: You're sitting on the couch watching CNN when the commentator makes a reference to some obscure country. Intrigued, you pick up your remote and switch to the "interactive reference channel." Key in the country's name on a small wireless keyboard on your coffee table, and voilà, you've got a map of the place, along with information on its political system, main exports—even an audio clip of its national anthem. Ho-hum. So you click a couple more times with your wireless mouse and check your e-mail, voice mail, and faxes in one spot, just in case something interesting has cropped up. Nothing. Enough of this. Click a couple more times and settle in for an evening of online MechWarrior 2.

Sound like science fiction? It isn't. Combine your existing multimedia computer, television set, and stereo system with a few new high-tech parts, and the dream of "interactive TV" can be yours today.

The Basics

You want to play? Well, if you don't want to spend thousands to get started, you'd better already have a multimedia PC with a sound card, a 28.8Kbps modem, and a CD-ROM drive. You should also have a big-screen (at least 27-inch) TV with the ability to accept multiple video sources. You need the screen size because text can be hard to read from across the room if your set's no bigger than an average PC monitor, while the ability to switch video sources will let you jump from regular TV to PC without having to swap cables. Make sure the stereo's fairly close by, too.

The first step calls for some muscle work: Roll up your sleeves and move your PC next to the TV. Not right next to it, of course—keep a couple of feet between the two for safety. Big TVs can generate powerful magnetic fields and static electricity, both of which could put your computer in a coma.

At this point, you'll probably discover that the cables for your mouse and keyboard weren't designed to reach all the way to your couch. You can go out and buy extension cables for about $30, or, if you want to be truly cool, you can go wireless.

Logitech's MouseMan Cordless and TrackMan Live both give you a mouse on the move. They use radio technology, so there's no chance of interference with other infrared controllers, such as your television remote. While the MouseMan Cordless works fine, the TrackMan Live lets you live large, with a useful range of 30 feet plus an extra button you can configure to execute commands. It even looks and feels like a remote control. (For more wireless control options, see "Modern Mice," March 1996, page 96).

For the keyboard, try out Sejin's cool little battery-powered infrared unit, the SWK 8630. It costs around $100, lies perfectly on your lap, and won't take up much room on your coffee table.

We couldn't find a sufficiently impressive wireless joystick, so you'll need to pick up an extension cable ($10–$20) for your favorite wired model. If gamepads will do, check out AITech's Wireless Bandit; you get the infrared receiver and two pads for about $60 (see review, May 1995, page 26).

Getting Seen

Once you assemble the basic pieces, it's time to hook them together. First and foremost, you need a piece of hardware called a scan converter, which attaches your PC to your TV. The scan converter takes your computer's RGB video output and converts it to a format your TV can understand (known as NTSC). Unfortunately, you can expect to lose something in the translation, at least until higher-res HDTV sets make their way into the U.S. mainstream. Converting graphics from the higher resolutions (800-by-600 and above) of your PC's graphics card and getting them to look good on your TV's lower resolution just doesn't work. Fortunately, most of the games and Windows-based reference titles you're likely to use in your new interactive home theater should work fine at 640-by-480 resolution.

Not all scan converters are the same. Try to get one that works without software drivers, which can conflict with some programs. Also, make sure the card supports at least 65,000 colors. And you should find a card that has S-VHS output, which delivers better picture quality if you have a TV set with S-VHS input. UMAX's MaxMedia TV/Pro meets all these requirements for around $180. (For a complete survey of scan converters, check out "Plain TV? Play TV!" *Electronic Entertainment*, September 1995, page 80.)

Now Hear This

Once you've connected all your new hardware and positioned it for maximum viewing pleasure, you'll want to link your sound card to your stereo system using a cable that converts the card's "mini" jack to the RCA inputs like those on standard stereo cables. Just make sure you use the sound card's Line Out port and not the Speakers port, or you could damage your stereo.

To take this interactive experience a giant step further, you should shoot for "surround sound." Unfortunately, PC-centric surround-sound technologies such as SRS and Spatializer, which work fine when the speakers are a couple of feet apart, don't hold up when the speakers are placed yards apart.

To get truly immersive sound in a large room, you need to surround yourself with speakers. And you need to pump that sound through a stereo receiver that supports Dolby Pro-Logic

Surround Sound. So if your current stereo setup doesn't support Pro-Logic, it's time for a trip to the stereo store. Denon, Yamaha, and Sony all make decent models at starting prices of around $200. You can use your existing speakers for the front right and left channels, but you'll need to get a trio of new speakers to handle the rear left, rear right, and center channels.

You don't have to spend a bundle to get good surround sound—but you can if you want. Adding three Altec Lansing Model 66 speakers for the rear channels will give you truly awe-inspiring results. They're expensive, but keep in mind that this surround-sound setup will also work with your TV and audio CD player. Want to go over the top? For as little as $150, you can add a subwoofer from Radio Shack that will reproduce explosions so convincingly, your neighbors will call the cops.

That's it! Assuming you already had a PC, a TV, and a Pro-Logic receiver, you've just spent around $1,300 to put together the coolest multimedia implementation in town. (Of course, if your budget is tight, you left out some of the more pricey parts, such as the surround sound and the wireless controllers.) Sit back, put up your feet, and enjoy. Heck, invite over a couple of friends and watch 'em drool. This is computing the way it ought to be. ■

Parts Is Parts

Speakers
Altec Lansing,
800-648-6663
Model 66, $200 each

Remote-Control Mouse
Logitech, 800-231-7717
TrackMan Live, $150
MouseMan Cordless, $80

Wireless Keyboard
Sejin America,
408-980-7550
SWK8630, $100

Wireless Gamepads
AITech, 800-882-8184
Wireless Bandit, $60

Scan Converter
UMAX, 800-562-0311
MaxMedia TV/Pro, $200

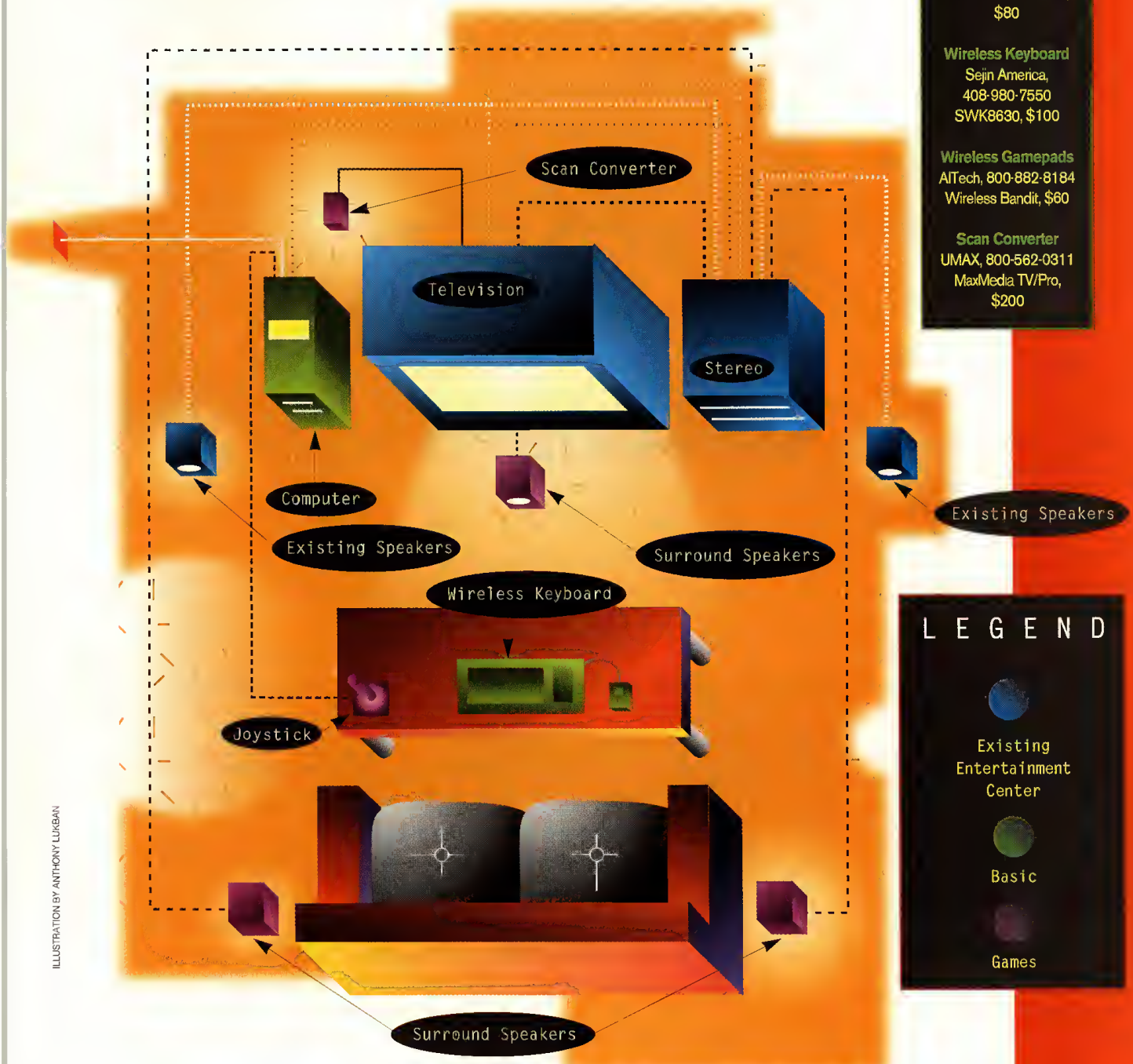


ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

TECH SHOP

By Christopher Lindquist

Windows 95 Shareware

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

Guess what? Windows 95 isn't perfect right out of the box. While that may not surprise you, what may is that it's easier—and cheaper—than you think to make Microsoft's best better. And, no, I'm not talking about buying the company's Plus! pack.

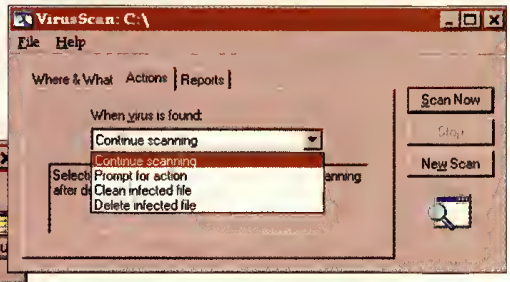
Do it with shareware, that great mass of "try before you buy" software so prevalent on the Internet and online services. Even before Windows 95's official release, hundreds of programmers, both pro and amateur, began creating utilities, applications, and add-ons designed to help you get the most out of Gates' operating system du jour. Though most of these programs may never challenge the Norton Utilities on the usefulness scale, a lot of shareware is well worth the download time. Heck, it can even make Windows 95 more fun to use.

But with so much shareware clogging the wires, the trick is to figure out what programs to use. To help you, *PC Entertainment* has assembled a short list of five great ones, and collected the addresses of a few places where you can hunt for more.

One word of warning: Though it's not as common as some fearmongers would have you believe, downloading shareware can lead to a nasty viral infection if you're not careful. Unscrupulous cyberpsychotics seem to love sneaking their latest germ into popular shareware titles. While most reputable shareware distribution sites regularly check their stock for viruses, it can't hurt to download a copy of a recent virus-protection package (see our recommendation below).

Also remember that if you like a piece of shareware, register it. That's the only way to ensure the continual creation of quality, low-cost software. As an added bonus, many shareware companies send registered users printed documentation and provide them with technical support.

WinZip makes handling file archives a breeze.



Better safe than sorry with VirusScan.

WinZip 6.0

PKWare's PKZip data compression products have dominated the online world for years. PKZip makes files smaller, helping to shorten online download times. As a result, much of the shareware you'll find online requires PKUnzip to return it to its original, usable form. But PKUnzip doesn't have a Windows interface.

WinZip solves this problem in a slick and easy way. WinZip's graphical interface gives

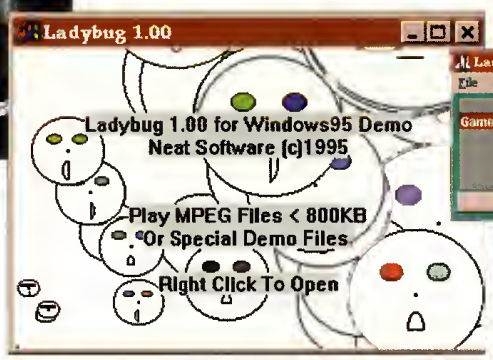
you point-and-click access to PKZip, plus other compression standards such as Tar and ARC. Compress and decompress files. Update archives. View compressed files. You can even scan compressed files for viruses.

LogoChange lets you replace the Windows 95 startup screen with more interesting sights.

This is a must-have for any Windows 95 user. (Nico Mak Computing; 800-242-4775; registration fee: $29)

VirusScan 95

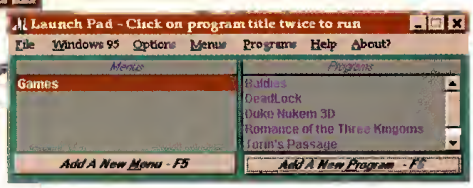
McAFee's VirusScan started out as a simple piece of shareware, but it's turned into a multimillion-dollar international business. The Windows 95 version of the popular virus-protection package can help protect your computer from just about any bug on the Net, and you can update the program by simply downloading new sets of virus profiles as they become available. (McAFee Associates; 408-988-3832; registration fee: $65)



View MPEG files without special hardware using Ladybug.

LogoChange 95

Tired of watching the same Windows 95 logo and info screens appear every time you start or shut down your computer? Display graphics of your choosing with LogoChange. This utility lets you easily add your own images to the Windows 95 startup and shutdown screens. (Viracker Software; registration fee: $10)



Say goodbye to the start button with Launch Pad.

Ladybug

Cutesy name, cool product. Neat Software's Ladybug lets you view MPEG video files without special hardware. Even cooler, you can use it as a plug-in with Mosaic or Netscape World Wide Web browsers, giving you a quick and easy way to view and save MPEG movies on the Web. (Neat Software; 204-269-4985; registration fee: $30)

Launch Pad

Sick of the Start button? Launch Pad lets you easily create customized drop-down menus that give you quick access to your favorite programs. No more messing with a deluge of icons. Meanwhile, the included Speed Bar gives you one-click access to many Windows 95 features, including exiting to DOS, configuring control panels, and the File Finder. (Dynamic Software Solutions; 313-525-3578; registration fee: $19.95) ■

Mac Finds

For more than a decade, the Macintosh and shareware have been nearly synonymous, with developers attracted by the Mac's user-friendliness. Archives of Mac apps abound on both the commercial services and such Internet sites as Info-Mac (**http://sumex-aim.stanford.edu** and scads of "mirror" sites worldwide). Here are a few of our favorite utilities.

Drop Menus

Envy Windows users' ability to click a menu and have it stay there? Get this program and one-click Mac menus are yours. (Richard Outerbridge; 71755.204@compuserve.com; freeware)

Bomb Shelter

When your Mac crashes, you're usually forced to reboot and lose anything you have onscreen. Bomb Shelter gives you a shot at resuming without having to dump everything. (Ambrosia Software; 800-231-1816; freeware)

Sparkle

You'd think that the Mac would support MPEG, right? Nope—unless you have this nifty MPEG player. Easier to use on System 7.5 and greater; you'll need to add QuickTime, Sound Manager, Thread Manager, and other extensions under System 7.0/7.1. (Maynard Handley; maynardh@ apple.com; freeware)

—Donald St. John

Where It's At

Finding shareware is easy. Every major online service, including CompuServe and America Online, has tons of products available for downloading. And you can find numerous sites on the Internet. Try starting with these super sites:

Jumbo! (www.jumbo.com)

Almost 50,000 shareware titles for nearly every operating system imaginable. Games, business apps, utilities—you name it and you'll find it here. Plus, Jumbo! is constantly updated with new titles. The site was still undergoing renovations at press time, rendering the search utility nonfunctional, and some of the shareware titles lacked full descriptions. But the Jumbo! folks are working to resolve all that.

shareware.com (www.shareware.com)

This may be *the* place to get shareware. Covering everything from the Amiga to UNIX, shareware.com carries more than 160,000 titles for your perusal. Search for specific titles, or just browse the various categories to find hidden gems. As a bonus, the site lists several locations for downloading various titles so if one is busy, you can try another. Unfortunately, shareware.com doesn't describe its wares very well, relying on a single short sentence to get the point across.

—CL

TECH SHOP

S.O.S.

Missing modems, sound scares, and going for it all.

Windows Modem Hunt

I installed a new internal 28.8Kbps modem the other day, but I can't figure out how to get Windows 95 to recognize it. The modem didn't come with any disks! What should I do?
Donald Stewart
Miami, FL

No disks at all? Boy, you must have bought one of those "bargain" modems. First, let Windows 95 have a crack at it. Click on "Start," drag up to "Settings," and drag over to "Control Panel." Now double-click on the "Add New Hardware" icon in the Control Panel window. Then let Windows 95 search for the hardware itself. If you're lucky, it will recognize the modem, install the proper drivers, and send you on your way.

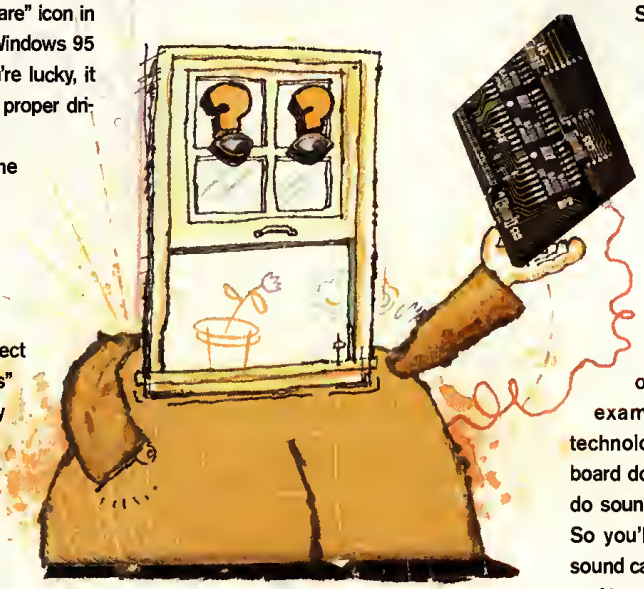
If that doesn't work, you can add the new hardware to the Windows 95 registry yourself. This time around, click on the "No" button when the Add New Hardware Wizard asks if you want Windows 95 to search for new hardware. Then select "Modem" from the "Hardware Types" window. Click on the "Don't detect my modem" button and hit "Next." You'll be presented with a long list of possible modems.

Here's when it pays to have your modem's documentation handy. If you can't find your modem on the list, see if your docs list a similar modem from another manufacturer that you can try. (You could also call the modem maker and see if it has a recommendation.) If not, select "Standard 28,800 bps modem" from the list. Now you'll need to know your modem's default communications port. (It's usually COM 3.) Select the proper port from the list. If all goes well, you'll be ready to surf. Otherwise, it's time to call tech support. You may have a bad modem or an internal conflict with another peripheral.

Making Some Noise

Some CD-ROMs say you can play their music on a regular CD player, but they always warn you not to play the first track or you could hurt your stereo. What's on the first track that's so bad?
Jerry Adams
Chester, VT

On many so-called enhanced CD-ROMs, that first track contains all the computer code. While such bits and bytes may be music to the ears of your PC, they could fry your stereo. Some standards require CD-ROM developers to put the "redbook" audio files—the ones you can play back in your audio CD player—after the data, so you have to skip one track to get to them.



New enhanced CDs support one of several formats that hide the computer data safely away from the standard audio tracks. For instance, the i-trax format stuffs all the data into a disc's "zero" track. Audio CD players automatically skip over this track and go right to the music. The CD Plus format puts the data in the center of the disc, on a separate "session" that won't be read by an audio CD player. (For more info, check out "Disc Jockeying," *Electronic Entertainment*, November 1995, page 66.)

All Together Now?

What's the best bet for computers these days—an all-in-one card providing sound, modem, voice mail, and the rest, or separate cards for everything? Doesn't the Diamond Edge 3D do everything, even graphics and 3-D? I don't want to waste money or space in my computer.
Name withheld by request

First off, you need to decide how much you want to spend and how many free slots you have in your PC. Most PCs have enough available bus slots to satisfy your needs. With three slots, you can have a sound card, graphics card, and modem. You can even get away with just two slots if you use an external modem. So unless you use a lot of special cards, such as network adapters or MPEG decoders, you shouldn't face a space crunch. Plus, you'll generally get better performance from a good-quality dedicated card than from an "all-in-one" solution.

Why? Someone trying to stick a whole bunch of functionality onto a single board may cut corners to get everything working at a reasonable price. Or the designers may have lots of experience in one area—graphics, for example—and less in sound or modem technology. For instance, while the Edge 3D board does both sound and graphics, it doesn't do sound under DOS, only under Windows 95. So you'll need a Sound Blaster or a similar sound card if you plan on playing DOS games.

Also, consider what happens if something goes wrong with the card. In a system built with dedicated parts, if the modem fails, for example, you'll still have sound. With a combination card, you'll have to live without either one until you get a fix or replacement. ■

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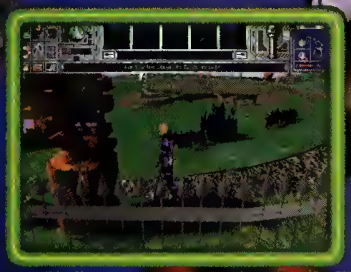

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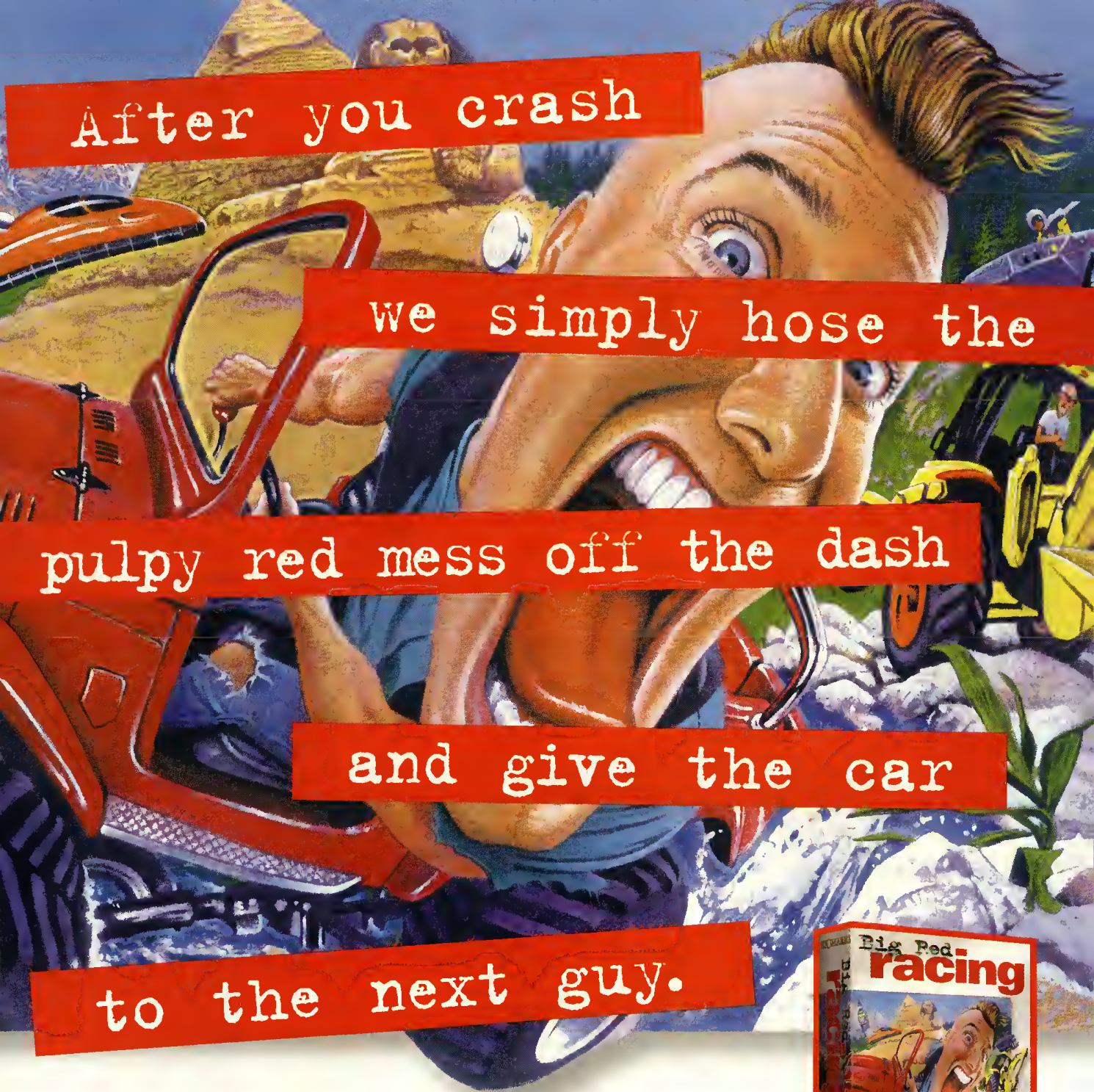

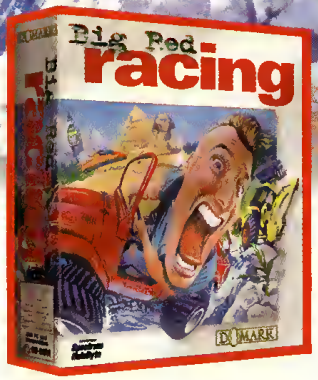

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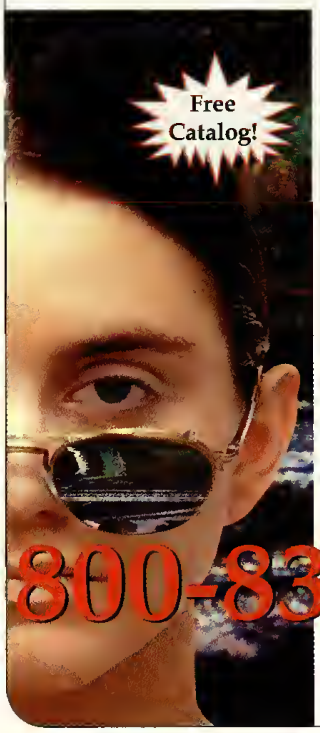

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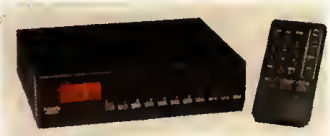

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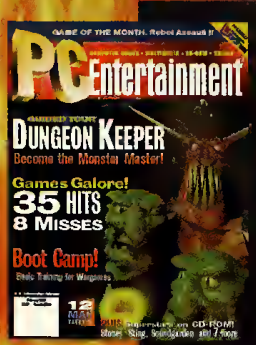

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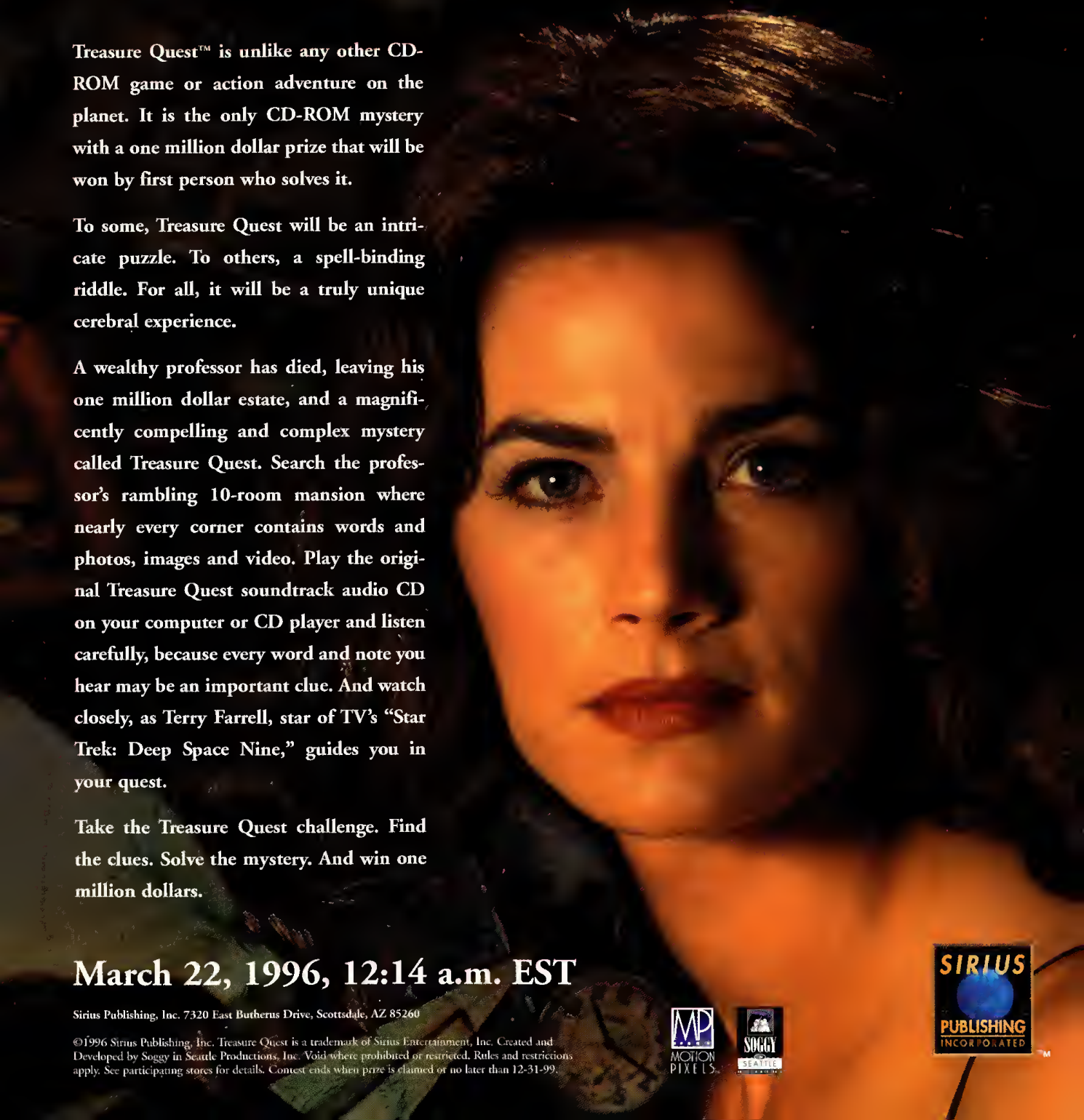

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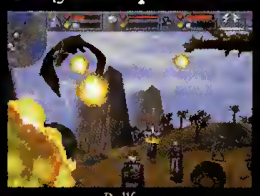

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